

A Participatory Process for Designing Emotionally Supportive Spaces in Shelters for Homeless LGBTQ Youth

by

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Abstract

Acceptance of gender and sexual diversity remains challenging within families, resulting in emotionally traumatized homeless LGBTQ youth seeking emergency and transitional shelters. The objective of this study was to discover space design elements for LGBTQ youth shelters that would emotionally support them. Using a critical ethnographic approach and a participatory research process, emotions associated by these youths with spaces they used were examined through a visual jury activity, self-observation diaries and one-on-one interviews with homeless LGBTQ youth, architects, advocates and shelter staff. Space designs that violated their dignity by evoking fear, anxiety, isolation, distrust, stress, and demotivation as well as designs that promoted their dignity by evoking trust, serenity, joy, pride, control, agency and security were identified. With the findings and insights that emerged, a design aid outlining shelter space elements that would be emotionally supportive to homeless LGBTQ youth was produced to assist architects engaging in social projects involving shelters. These elements, although aimed at promoting the dignity of LGBTQ youth, could be beneficial to all shelter residents.

Keywords: Affective Design, Inclusive Design, Critical Ethnography, Participatory Process, Homeless LGBTQ Youth, Shelters for Homeless, Dignity Violation, Dignity Promotion.

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Dedication

To Lily, Niko and the person under the bridge

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Preface

As a member of the LGBTQ community, I have struggled with housing and financial instability in the early years of my arrival in Canada. My motivation for taking on this project was to contribute in some way to my community. The inclusive design master's program at OCAD University inspired me to engage in a participatory design process, bringing homeless LGBTQ youth into the research, as well as architects, advocates and shelter staff. This provided an opportunity for them to share their perspectives. I worked with them to discover how spaces could be designed to be emotionally supportive to homeless LGBTQ youth, using my knowledge of interior design and my work experience for half a decade in a community centre serving LGBTQ populations.

During the research, I found my role as a researcher shifting between an insider and an outsider—an insider to the community being studied, but an outsider to the experience of residing in a shelter. Identifying and acknowledging my biases as a researcher, I adopted a critical ethnographic approach in favour of homeless LGBTQ youth and used multiple data gathering methods—visual jury activities, self-observation diaries and one-on-one interviews. Through comprehensive analysis of the data I came up with a holistic design aid for architects with suggestions about how spaces in shelters for homeless LGBTQ youth could be designed to promote the dignity of its residents. I believe that, as inclusive designers, our work often involves using design as a tool to facilitate inclusion of diversity in all of its forms and to support advocacy for social change.

1 Introduction

Human diversity in gender* manifests in the form of a spectrum between and beyond the binary of masculine and feminine. Human sexuality is also diverse and complex and is not limited to heterosexuality*. Unfortunately, acceptance of such diversity remains challenging in societies, and even within families, which predominantly hold binary views in such matters. Due to this reason, for a majority of individuals between 16 and 26 years of age (referred to as youth in this report) who identify as lesbian*, gay*, bisexual*, transgender*, transsexual*, two-spirit*, queer*, questioning*, “a *house* is not always a loving *home*” that nurtures in them positive emotions* such as joy, respect and serenity (Abramovich, 2012). It is small wonder, therefore, that approximately 25-40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ (Josephson & Wright, 2000).

The term LGBTQ* in this research is used as a short term for the broader spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities, and is not just limited to the above listed acronyms. Individuals from the LGBTQ community may or may not self-identify with one or more self-identification. The term queer in itself is a broad umbrella that

* All starred items in this page are listed in the Glossary in Appendix A.

challenges societal standards of normalcy and binaries. Additionally, inclusion is about embracement of diversity and the celebration of the uniqueness of each individual with pride.

Shelters for the homeless—both emergency shelters* that permit overnight stay and transitional housing* that offers accommodation for longer periods—provide individuals with basic physiological needs such as a roof over their heads, warmth, food, and presumably safety. And this is important for their psychological health as well, given the variety of negative emotions such as despair, hopelessness, fear, hurt, stress and loneliness that they need to manage in their unique situation. Advocates such as Abramovich¹ have highlighted for over a decade the denial of home and safety to queer and transgender youth, and advocated for shelters that cater to this vulnerable population*.

However, the sad reality is that there are no emergency shelters for LGBTQ youth in Canada and, until last year, there was no transitional housing built exclusively for them either. Standardized shelters largely remain the main refuge for this population of youth. Sadly, in these shelters they often face as much or greater risk of

* All starred items in this page are listed in the Glossary in Appendix A.

¹ Abramovich is a researcher at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Social and Epidemiological Research Department, Toronto, Ontario. He has been addressing the issue of LGBTQ youth homelessness in Canada for the past 10 years.

sexual and physical exploitation than on the streets, and experience transphobic* and homophobic* violence, resulting in compromised physical, mental and emotional wellbeing (Abramovich, 2015). For the first time, in 2013, respondents in a Street Needs Assessment conducted by the City of Toronto were asked how they identify, and their report showed that 21% of homeless youth in Toronto shelters identified as LGBTQ (Street Needs Assessment, 2013).

The YMCA's Sprott House in Toronto, which began operating Canada's first LGBTQ youth transitional housing program as recently as in February 2016, is the first transitional housing program in Canada designed exclusively for this population. With the recent release of version 4 of the Toronto Shelter Standards² by the City of Toronto after 12 years, where a section is devoted to LGBTQ clients, there is hope for more shelters being built for this group. Given this scenario, and given the emotional history of trauma in most homeless LGBTQ youth, research into design of shelter spaces that evoke positive emotional responses and eliminate sources of stress becomes important. Space, in this context, would denote not just the built environment but also the use(s) it enables the occupant to make of it.

* All starred items in this page are listed in the Glossary in Appendix A.

² Version 4 of the Toronto Shelter Standards can be accessed at the following link:
<http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/Shelter%20Support%20&%20Housing%20Administration/Article/Hostels/Toronto%20Shelter%20Standards/toronto-shelter-standards-2016-final.pdf>

Needless to say, catering to physiological and safety needs would still remain the top priority for shelter design. However, addressing their traumatic emotional state is also important for their healing and growth. The thesis of this project is that *designing spaces in shelters in ways that evoke positive emotional responses in homeless LGBTQ youth could help them experience a sense of stability, serenity and belonging, which can be psychologically healing and beneficial*. And the objective of the project was to compile a design aid to guide architects engaging in social projects for designing/building shelters for this population, which includes affective design* elements (that evoke positive emotions in users) and participatory processes (that involve collaboration among stakeholders).

Affective design is emerging as an independent field, and becoming widely embraced by the healthcare field, among others, with promising results (Ulrich, 2000). However, there is no research that has used affective design in designing shelters for the homeless. Further, although there is substantial research in the domain of shelter design (Pable, 2007, 2013), none has specifically explored the requirements for designing shelters for homeless LGBTQ youth.

* Listed in the Glossary in Appendix A.

To address this gap, the project attempted to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What elements of space design evoke negative emotions in homeless LGBTQ youth and what elements evoke positive emotions?
- 2) How can a participatory process be established among stakeholders to create and maintain emotionally supportive spaces in shelters for homeless LGBTQ youth?

In order to explore the association between **space design** and **emotions** for homeless LGBTQ youth, a research framework as shown in Figure 1 was adopted. This framework is expanded in Section 2.

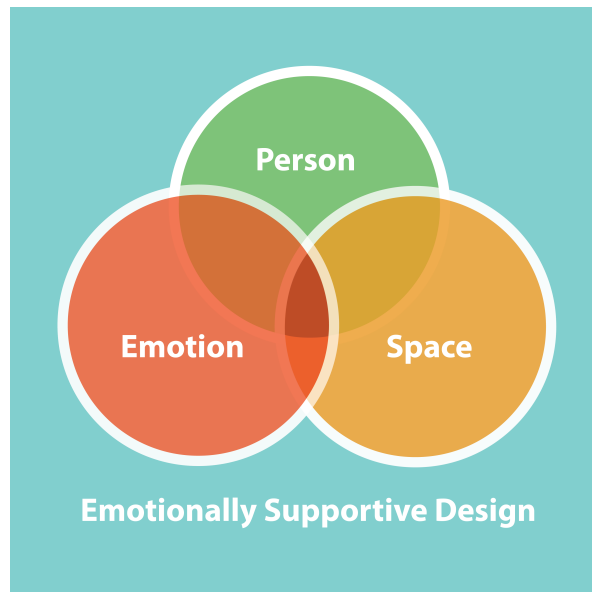


Figure 1: Research framework

Further, Figure 2 provides an illustration of how the youths' associations between space and emotion might lead to better design that addresses their emotional needs and caters to their wellbeing. Designs that are damaging to the emotional wellbeing of residents might hinder the residents' comfort with the space and/or cause emotional trauma. On the other hand, designs that prove nurturing to the emotional needs of the residents would help promote their emotional wellbeing and work as a supportive environment.

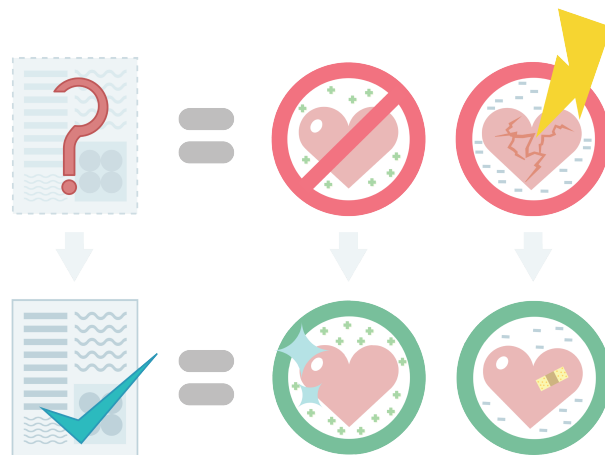


Figure 2: Effect of design elements on emotions

An environmental scan of shelter design practices suggested that the missing link in the design process* of homeless LGBTQ youth shelters is the exclusion of end-users' involvement and input in the design process, as illustrated in Figure 3.

* Listed in the Glossary in Appendix A.

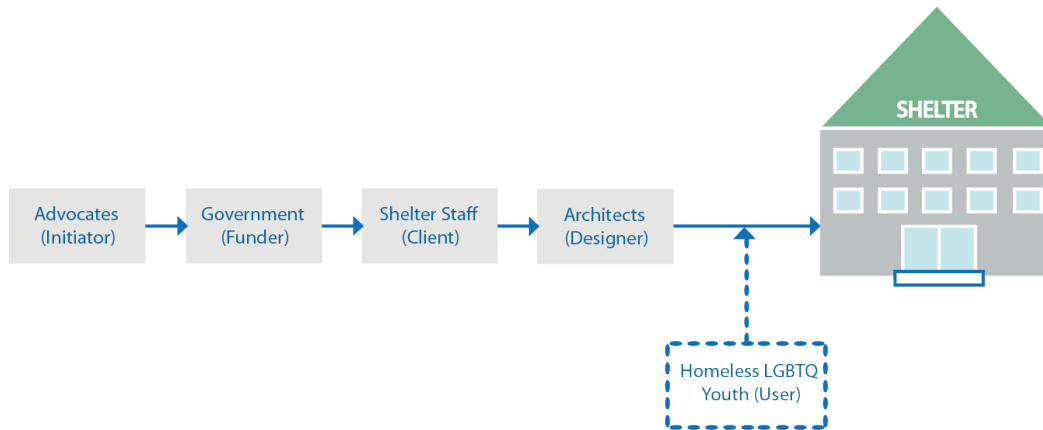


Figure 3: Gap in the design process of homeless LGBTQ youth shelters

In order to include the voice of homeless LGBTQ youth in the dialogue, a participatory research process was adopted using an inclusive design* approach, which advocates recognizing diversity and uniqueness in end-users and including them in the design. Six homeless LGBTQ youth were involved through a self-observation diary method and a visual jury* activity, supplemented by contextual interviews. Sixteen stakeholders involved in the shelter design process—architects/interior designers, advocates and shelter staff—were also included in the inquiry through a group visual jury activity and some one-on-one interviews. A critical ethnographic approach was adopted in favour of the LGBTQ youth. Section 3 describes the research methods in greater detail.

* All starred items in this page are listed in the Glossary in Appendix A.

In conclusion, the importance of understanding the complexity and uniqueness of the end-users' contextual requirements in design cannot be underestimated, especially when the end-users are considered as vulnerable populations. Based on empirical evidence gathered through a participatory process, this project presents a design aid for architects of homeless shelters, which suggests design of spaces for homeless LGBTQ youth to promote their dignity through emotional support.

2 Literature Review

The research framework introduced in the previous section is expanded in this section along the three components—**person**, **emotion** and **space**—by presenting related work and situating this work in the existing knowledgebase. It is critical to note in here that the core of the overlap between person, emotion and space is dignity and therefore this section will start with the elaboration of dignity in the context of this research. Each of the three components is expanded systematically through this activity to arrive at an understanding at the end of the section to substantiate the research plan.

2.1 Dignity

At the core of this framework is human dignity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights as proclaimed by the United Nations and the Ontario Human Rights Code recognize dignity and human rights as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. Dignity takes two forms, according to Jacobson's taxonomy of dignity (2009):

- 1) Human dignity: the abstract, universal quality of value that belongs to every being simply by being human.
- 2) Social dignity: generated in the interactions between and among individuals, collectives, and societies.

Jacobson states that human dignity is considered to be inherent in every human being while social dignity is produced through social interactions and every social interaction has the potential to be a dignity encounter that could be either a dignity violation or a dignity promotion (*ibid*). Buelow (2015) applied Jacobson's taxonomy to person-to-person interactions in the context of people with disabilities. Additionally, Buelow, Migotto and Tsotsos (2016) applied the same taxonomy to person-to-computer interactions in the context of older adults. In this research, dignity violation and dignity promotion were examined during the analysis of data on person-to-space interactions in the context of LGBTQ youth in shelters. In essence, this research is about designing **spaces** that evoke **emotions** in **persons** that respect and promote their dignity.

2.2 Person

2.2.1 Homeless LGBTQ Youth

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH) at York University defines 'homelessness' as:

The situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and

discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing. (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2012)

According to the COH, homeless individuals could be: unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated or at risk of homelessness. The literature available about homeless LGBTQ youth needs is limited.

In the following paragraphs, the needs of homeless LGBTQ youth are highlighted based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs* to obtain a holistic view of all their needs. It is not to argue that any single need is more important than another; rather Maslow's "needs" categories are referred to highlight areas of concern.

Concerns About Physiological & Safety Needs

A major factor for homelessness among LGBTQ youth is family conflict, whether running away or being kicked out once they come out (Cull, Platzer & Balloch, 2006; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). In many cases, youth have suffered abuse, violence, homophobia* and transphobia* on account of their families or people around them (Abramovich, 2012).

* All starred items in this page are listed in the Glossary in Appendix A.

The nature of street life compromises the emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of homeless youth (Kelly & Caputo, 2007) and puts them at higher risks of substance use, survival sex, prostitution, and getting sexually transmitted diseases or blood borne infections such as HIV and Hepatitis C (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006). Many of the street youth practice survival sex and/or sex work so as to have a source of income for meeting their basic needs. Other methods of getting money are through government support funding (e.g. Ontario Works or ODSP) or through panhandling, and in some cases illegal acts such as stealing or drug dealing (Barnaby, Penn & Erickson, 2010).

Substance use has been stated to be extremely high in youth who remain on the street compared to youth in shelters (Ray, 2006). In a report by Public Health Agency of Canada (2006), 80% of street youth smoke on a daily basis, and 40% reported recent alcohol intoxication (p. 31). Street youth use substances to help with soothing pain, sadness and to cope with daily stress (Kidd, 2003).

Shelter staff often lack LGBTQ cultural competency training, and in some cases might be homophobic and/or transphobic (Abramovich, 2014). Similarly, shelter residents might bully or use violence against LGBTQ youth. This makes shelters inaccessible and unsafe spaces for

LGBTQ youth and especially for trans youth. The needs of trans youth are heightened when they do not have a supportive network, easy access to health care, money and especially when they stay at gendered shelters.

As a result, the experience becomes traumatic for LGBTQ youth, especially when shelters do not have proper policies and guidelines that protect LGBTQ youth (Abramovich, 2012). This leads youth to decide to remain on the streets and also to change sleeping locations due to being/feeling under constant danger due to lack of safety (Yonge Street Mission, 2009).

LGBTQ youth face additional barriers when accessing health care services, such as:

- Not having a piece of ID/health card;
- Fear from or actually facing homophobia and transphobia;
- Dealing with professionals who may not have adequate knowledge in the area of working with LGBTQ populations; and
- In some cases, being turned away (Quintana, Rosenthal & Krehely, 2010)

Additionally, trans youth have certain needs for transitioning (hormonal therapy, regular check-up, blood work, etc.) and due to the

earlier reasons, this may lead them to rely on risky methods to help fulfill those needs such as getting hormone or silicon injections from the streets with no medical supervision, which could result in compromising their health (Quintana, Rosenthal & Krehely, 2010).

Recent immigrants who are also youth and homeless have additional and varying needs compared to local homeless youth (Yonge Street Mission, 2009). LGBTQ individuals migrate to areas such as Toronto because they are perceived to be “LGBTQ friendly” (Abramovich, 2008, cited in Abramovich (2012, p. 45)). Additionally, some of the youth who end up in the shelter system are fleeing their home country and waiting to get their refugee status; youth who lack status or appropriate documentation are not entitled to access resources/services and are particularly vulnerable (Evenson & Barr, 2009). In many cases, those individuals might have fled their home country under traumatic circumstances and might need legal help. Many might also need to deal with language barrier. Although there are no statistics of LGBTQ homeless youth who are also immigrants, the needs of this particular population should be addressed early on, as the current shelters may be neglecting the needs of those youth and to also provide them with appropriate support they need (Abramovich, 2008, cited in Abramovich (2012)).

Concerns About Love & Belonging

In view of the above circumstances, youth feel lonely and isolated, with minimal support (Abramovich, 2012). Street youth do not pick their social networks based on liking the people they are with, but more often it is opportunity driven due to circumstances and lack of options (Yonge Street Mission, 2009).

Pet ownership plays an important role in helping homeless youth cope with depression and loneliness, and provides the youth with the ability to make better choices and decisions for themselves and their pets, in order to avoid being incarcerated and hence separated from their pets (Rew, 2000). Although statistics on the number of homeless youth who have pets is not readily available, having pets might also become another barrier for homeless youth when accessing shelters because only a few shelters in Canada allow pets.

Concerns About Psychological Wellbeing & Esteem

Homeless LGBTQ youth suffer from high levels of depression and suicidal ideation (Safren & Heimberg, 1999). Moreover, youth who experience homelessness report feelings of low self-worth, lack of control, isolation, and rejection, which are all contributors to suicidal ideation (Kidd & Kral, 2002). More than 33% of youth who are experiencing homelessness in Canada suffer from Major Depressive

Disorder (MDD) or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Evenson & Barr, 2009).

Concerns About Self Actualization

Education and employment are especially compromised for LGBTQ youth, and this negatively impacts their socioeconomic status later in life (American Psychological Association, 2012). LGBTQ runaway homeless youth (RHY) might be hindered from pursuing education and employment owing to the lack of guardianship, residency, and transportation (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2008). Trans-identified individuals who do not have up-to-date identification and legal documentation face a more complex situation when looking for employment, especially when their appearance does not match their photo ID (Mottet, 2004).

Summary

As can be seen from the above discussion, LGBTQ youth experiences high levels of trauma, resulting in a continuous vicious cycle of deprivation of basic human needs along with lack of support. LGBTQ youth are thus “excluded from the simple aspects of daily living” (Abramovich, 2012, p. 41). Unfortunately, LGBTQ homeless youth are trapped in survival mode due to their circumstances. Therefore, a specialized shelter for LGBTQ that also applies affective

design principles will afford a healing environment that caters to their specific needs.

2.2.2 Key Stakeholders in Shelter Design

Architects

Through studying and researching a project, determining what is necessary in the design and engaging stakeholders and users of the space, an architect produces functional plans and architectural programs that meets the budget in hand. This process allows architects to propose a design and supervise the building process while working with many other professionals such as contractors, interior designers and electrical engineers (RAIC, 2016). In other words, architects often take the role of a facilitator in design projects. Unfortunately, not all architects include end-users throughout the design process.

Architects are liable to adhere to local building codes, fire regulations, zoning laws, health and safety guidelines, municipal, provincial and federal government bylaws and standards to ensure the safety of those who occupy the space (RAIC, 2016). Some architects further specialize in certain areas, such as sustainability and social projects. A client-oriented architect will perform a post occupancy

survey to highlight near future tasks or urgent areas of concern that need to be addressed and resolved, once a design is complete.

Advocates

Advocates usually publicly support particular causes and may help individuals fight for causes and politics. They may be politicians, academic researchers, lawyers, artists, architects or simply anyone who is speaking up for a cause. Often an advocate will attend meetings where decisions are made and/or may appear in media for not being heard. They may also create pressure through avenues such as media, social networks, or peaceful protests to get the attention of people in positions of power and to ensure that their cause is addressed properly (Berry, 2010).

Professional advocates are knowledgeable and are very familiar with current processes, standards, laws in place, as well as gaps and loop holes. This often helps in making their argument very powerful and persuasive. They often argue using data, evidence, research findings and direct quotations from the population they are working with. They may also make recommendations and suggest solutions (Berry, 2010). In this sense, advocates are initiators of a cause and are also emotionally invested in that cause.

Shelter Staff

The 2016 Toronto Shelter Standards have very specific responsibilities for shelter staffs to adhere to. Shelter staff play an extremely important and crucial role in sustaining order in the shelter and ensuring everyone's health, safety and needs being met. This includes the needs of LGBTQ individuals as clearly stated in section 10.3.3 of updated Toronto Shelter Standards since they have a direct one-on-one interaction with this population (Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, 2016).

In general, shelter staffs have specific job tasks, such as: referrals, emergency calls, supervising floors, ensuring smooth operation and protocols being met. In addition, shelter staffs are expected to be aware of city and community resources that they can refer individuals to in case there is not a formal partnership with another resource. Shelter staffs are also expected to respect the confidentiality and privacy of all clients, to accommodate individuals with unique needs, and also to treat residents with respect and dignity at all times (Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, 2016; The Homeless Hub, 2015).

Shelter staff positions vary from front-line workers, case-managers and counsellors to directors. They may work alone or in

small groups. Shelter staffs assist shelter residents to create plans for future housing and financial stability or improving current situation. Some shelters have specific programs that staff might develop and conduct such as workshops on safe sex, harm reduction, Alcoholic Anonymous (AA), and such (The Homeless Hub, 2015).

2.3 Emotion

2.3.1 Affective Design

Affective design, which emerged from the field of Human-Computer Interaction, focuses on the relationship between users and products primarily targeting their emotional experiences. (IEA, n.d.). While affective design is generally applied to product design, it is equally meaningful in space design, particularly in the context of emotionally supportive space design.

Design concepts similar to, and connected with, affective design are: supportive design (Ulrich, 1991, 1992, 1999, 2000) and psychosocially supportive design* (Dilani, 2009) in healthcare facility design; emotional design* (Norman, 2005) in industrial design; affective engineering (Kansei Engineering Group, 2012) in product

* All starred items in this page are listed in the Glossary in Appendix A.

design and engineering; and experience design (Aarts & Marzano, 2003) in architecture, product, event and service design. The main theme that connects these theories and practices is that objects, spaces, products have the property to “affect” our emotions, feelings and experiences. The goal from psychosocially supportive design, for instance, is to: “stimulate the mind in order to create pleasure, creativity, satisfaction and enjoyment” (Dilani, 2009, p. 55).

2.3.2 Supportive Design

Ulrich (2000) advocates that eradicating stress sources in the environment and enhancing positive environmental features that illuminate the wellbeing of individuals initiate a “supportive design”. In the context of designing for health care, Ulrich (2000) describes that supportive design fosters the following:

Sense of Control

Lack of a sense of control produces unnecessary stress in patients and affects health results unfavourably (Ulrich, 1992). Besides administrative factors such as long waiting times or lack of information, loss of control can also be triggered by compromised privacy or unclear way-finding signage (Ulrich, 1991). On the other hand, a sense of control can be achieved by simple designs like

providing a dimmer light by the patient's bedside, or ensuring that hospital gardens are wheel chair accessible (Ulrich, 2000).

Social Support

Social support relieves stress and reduces feelings of social isolation. For instance, well-designed, comfortable and enjoyable waiting areas reduce the stress of waiting and encourage positive interaction (Ulrich, 2000). Portable and comfortable furniture in shared spaces in hospitals would allow patients and visitors to form small flexible groups, which could support their healing journey.

Positive Distractions

Positive distractions such as art, companion animals, nature and music, can efficiently support restoration from stress (Ulrich, 1991). Using access to nature as a positive distraction can be implemented by having windows with views to nature or an aquarium in a high-stress waiting area (Ulrich, 2000). Minimizing noise, which distracts patients negatively and becomes a source of annoyance and stress is also a supportive design element.

Dilani (2009) describes psychosocially supportive design, also known as salutogenic approach to design, as design that:

... stimulates and engages people, both mentally and socially, and supports an individual's sense of coherence. The basic function of psychosocially supportive design is to start a mental

process by attracting human attention, which may reduce anxiety and promote positive psychological emotions. (2009, p. 55)

Dilani mentions architectural parameters that are connected to psychological aspects (2005):

- **Stimulation** (noise, light, colour, crowding)
- **Coherence** (predictability, landmarks, signage)
- **Affordances** (ambiguity, sudden perceptual changes, feedback)
- **Control** (climatic/light controls, privacy)
- **Restoration** (solitude, shelter, minimal distraction)

Those built environment factors that influence and impact our emotional wellbeing can be adopted from the research of Ulrich and Dilani who mainly focus on designing for health care facilities. The benefits of having a supportive environment can extend to other populations and demographics such as people residing in shelters and housing programs. By applying these factors, designers can design to advance and evoke positive emotions in end-users and preserve as well as promote their dignity and eliminate dignity violation sources in the built environment.

2.4 Space

2.4.1 Research on Shelter Design

Some academic research on shelter space design has focused on psychological aspects of the residents. Pable (2007 & 2013) has published remarkable work focused on providing psychological support through space design. She argues that shelter spaces can enhance one's confidence, self-worth and sense of control with simple alterations to the space, and identifies design opportunities that can address the homeless population's needs. Pable uses Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a framework when designing a shelter space, similar to the approach this research has adopted. For instance, she informs the reader that the entrance to the shelter is crucial as it can determine whether it suggests a respectful environment or not; therefore, it influences how people respect and interact with each other, the staff and/or the space.

In her second research (2013), Pable explains the importance of possessions in one's life, and how the homeless population is deprived from possessing materials due to their circumstances, leading to a sense of loss, helplessness or failure. She also mentions that possessions are essential to support them in self-restoration phase. Crowding of space might lead to a feeling of lack of control. Waiting

time can be less stressful if options are provided through space design to encourage positive social interaction such as playing board games. An easily visible wall clock would enhance their sense of control.

Cooper, Walsh and Smith (2009) in their research with young pregnant and homeless women in seven shelters across six Canadian cities, state that those women needed privacy (a lockable private room), safety (surveillance cameras), mobility (ramps and elevators) and comfort (e.g. feeling as one is at home and being able to carry/nurture an infant).

Trauma Informed Care (TIC) has been applied to designing shelter programs and services. Hopper, Bassuk and Olivet (2010) stress the need for trauma awareness, and emphasize safety, opportunities to rebuild control, and a strength-based approach when providing services to homeless populations. The authors state that providers of homeless services have to not only respond to the immediate crisis of homelessness, but also contribute to the longer-term healing of those individuals. While they provide examples of youth shelters, domestic violence shelters and family shelters that embraced a TIC framework, they do not mention LGBTQ homeless populations.

Likewise, based on their research on trauma-informed care, Butler, Critelli and Rinfrette (2011) suggest that in order to provide care to people who have experienced trauma one has to consider safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, choice and empowerment. The authors apply those factors on vulnerable populations including refugees and immigrants, who have been through traumatic experiences and some of this population also identifies as LGBTQ.

2.4.2 Shelter Standards

Shelters are of two types: emergency shelters and transitional housing. Emergency shelters are an immediate crisis response catering to the physiological needs of individuals who are homeless, such as offering them food and a place to sleep. These shelters usually have less privacy; sleeping areas range from large dormitories to groups per unit. Each shelter sets its own rules with regards to length of stay, services provided and policies (The Salvation Army in Canada, 2016).

Transitional Housing, on the other hand, allows residents to stay from a few months to a couple of years and provides residents greater privacy in the use of space. Programs and services offered focus on sustaining housing stability through client-based support and future based planning (The Homeless Hub, 2015). This research focuses

primarily on transitional housing, but does not totally ignore emergency shelters.

In February 2016, the City of Toronto published version 4 of the Toronto Shelter Standards, 12 years after the previous version. The Standards have been highly praised for their thoroughness, clarity, and inclusion such as specifying what measurements should be adhered to and how to handle unique cases like individuals from the LGBTQ2S community. A section is dedicated to LGBTQ clients, including staff interaction with these clients and their needs (Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, 2016). Some highlights are:

- Asking clients for their gender identity during intake rather than assuming;
- Ensuring privacy in transgender clients' access to showers;
- Providing at least one fully accessible and gender-neutral* washroom per shelter;
- Increasing privacy options for sleeping areas;
- Discouraging crowding for health and safety reasons;
- Treating hormones that belong to transgender clients as any other medication;

* Listed in the Glossary in Appendix A.

- Connecting them to community services that support their needs; and
- Ensuring their safety and dignity is preserved and respected.

The Standards give shelter staff vast control over the manner of use of the space. For instance, they specify that in shelters with shower stalls without curtains, or if the client shares their concern with the staff, the staff can allow that client to shower alone during times when the shower area is closed. However, this is based on the assumption that all the staffs are accommodating, well trained and knowledgeable of the standards guidelines. Moreover, the resident in this scenario has less control over their environment and how they interact with it or option for controlled privacy. These are some of the gaps to be addressed through emotional design.

2.5 Summary

Through the literature review and environmental scan section, the research was able to connect key points that inform the research methods and pave the road to a design solution. The design application of supportive design suggested by Ulrich's and Dilani's guidelines could extend to other demographics than occupants of health care facilities. It is also interesting to note that their guidelines

and concepts shared a lot in common with the concepts discussed by Pable. Although the earlier two focus on health care facilities, Pable focuses on homeless shelters. These concepts can be transferred into designing shelters for homeless LGBTQ youth to result in designs that help in promoting individuals' dignity and eliminate dignity violation sources.

This is where the dignity framework simplified the components of what needs to be included or eliminated when designing spaces by simply framing them as dignity promotion and dignity violation sources. In this sense, the common concepts shared by Ulrich, Dilani and Pable fall neatly under the umbrella of Nora Jacobson's taxonomy of dignity and facilitate the presentation of findings.

It was essential to understand the roles of the current key stakeholders in the context of designing shelters for LGBTQ as well as discussing the current guidelines provided by the Toronto shelter standards. Effective design of spaces requires taking into account the manner of use of those spaces and providing necessary guidelines about those processes.

3 Methods

3.1 Research Approach & Process

In keeping with the spirit of the research topic, a critical ethnographic research approach was adopted, which influenced the data gathering methods and the data analysis process. Critical ethnography seeks to understand the cognition and behaviour of research subjects within historical, cultural, and social frameworks, its overriding goal being to free individuals from sources of domination and repression (Anderson, 1989). An example of this approach is providing self-observation diaries to homeless LGBTQ youth participants to write about their space-emotion experiences.

A participatory research process was carried out to engage the end-users (homeless LGBTQ youth) and key stakeholders (architects, advocates and shelter staff) in identifying the problem and in being a part of the process for generating solutions. Six LGBTQ homeless youth, six architects/interior designers, five advocates and five shelter staff were recruited as participants in the study. Their perspectives on shelter space designs and associated emotions were gathered through three user-centered data gathering methods: visual jury activity, self-observation diary and one-on-one interview. Findings and insights that

emerged through data analysis are presented in Section 4. Appendix E provides some images from the researcher's journal and research process.

3.2 Ethical Conduct of Research

An ethical research protocol was drawn up and approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Board of OCAD University (No. 2016-12)³. Posters inviting homeless LGBTQ youth to participate in the research were put up in LGBTQ organizations, community centres and service providers in Toronto such as The 519 Community Centre and Egale Canada. Posters were also distributed through the researcher's friends and former work colleagues in their networks. Three key stakeholder groups that were approached through email invitations sent out to the researcher's professional and personal networks were: architects/interior designers, preferably with work experience in shelter projects or social projects; advocates on LGBTQ homeless youth matters; and shelter staff, volunteers or social workers working directly with homeless populations.

³ The research described in this report complies with the Tri-Council Policy Statement version 2 (2014). REB approval number: 2016-12. Associated documentation is on file in the Office of Research at OCAD University.

Potential participants were informed about the research process through an invitation letter following which those who wished to participate in the research signed a consent form. The participants were reminded at the beginning of each data gathering activity that their participation was voluntary and that they could opt out of the study at any time. Consent to audio record the session was obtained from the three participants who were interviewed (an architect, an advocate and a shelter staff), and they were given the option to request for a copy of the recorded audio; but none of them made the request.

The youth were given a thank-you card with \$25 grocery card and public transport travel fare as a token of appreciation for their time and efforts. All participants were provided with snacks and tea/coffee during their session. Research sessions with the youth participants were conducted individually in order to secure their privacy.

Data confidentiality was ensured through the use of codes instead of participant names in the data transcripts. Participant consent forms, code sheets, and all forms of raw data were stored in locked cabinets or password-protected computer systems to ensure data security. Transcripts and data analysis files were stored securely

and separately from the above. All raw data will be deleted by May 31, 2016. Participants were assured that their anonymity would be protected in all oral and written dissemination of the research results. Additionally, participants were offered the option to receive a copy of the study report upon completion.

3.3 Participants

Six LGBTQ homeless youth, six architects/interior designers, five advocates and five shelter staff were recruited as participants in the study. The youth participants had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. Two of these youth self-identified as bisexual and one of each identified as transgender, transsexual, genderqueer*, and gay. Three of the youth are people of colour; two of them came to Canada as refugees and one is a new immigrant.

The youth participated individually in a visual jury activity, self-observation diary exercises and followed by a short interview for clarification purposes. On the other hand, a group visual jury session was conducted for the participating architects, advocates and shelter staff. Due to the limited numbers of advocates' attendance in the group session, individual meetings were arranged to ensure that there

* Listed in the Glossary in Appendix A.

is enough data captured from this group. One member from each of the key stakeholders participated in one-on-one interview with the researcher.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Visual Jury Activity

Visual jurying or perceptual occupancy programming is a methodology pioneered by Orfield Laboratories (n.d.) in which users' pre-cognitive responses to visuals are documented. It is a pre-verbal test of feelings and associations produced by a set of stimuli.

Participants were shown a series of twenty images of spaces that included private and shared sleeping areas, bathrooms, communal areas, study areas, and images that included positive distractions such as greenery, pets, artworks or rainbow flags. Participants were then asked to rate each image using a copy of the semantic scale form shown in Figure 4.

Semantics Scale:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Welcoming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unfriendly
Unsupportive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Supportive
Comfortable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Awkward
Clear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Confusing
Difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Easy
Boring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interesting
Cold	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Warm
Pleasant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unpleasant
Stressful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Relaxing

Figure 4: Visual jury scale

The word semantics included opposites, such as: comfortable/awkward, unfriendly/welcoming, and cold/warm. Words such as safe/unsafe were avoided as they might trigger negative feelings and harm the wellbeing of the participants. Semantics such as pleasant/unpleasant were used instead. The semantics were not arranged in a uniform left (negative) and right (positive) manner; rather the order was shifted so that it does not influence participants' answers. The semantic words were driven from human emotional needs to meet the study's goal. Plain language was adopted better understanding and smoother communication.

As can be seen from Figure 4, the scale had ratings from 1 to 7. The closer the selected number was to a word, the more it meant to have displayed that feeling than the opposite word. For instance, if a participant chose 2 on the first row, it meant that the picture was more welcoming to the person than unfriendly, if the participant chose 4, it meant that the picture was neutral with neither or either being perceived as welcoming or unfriendly, and so on.

Visual Jury with Architects, Advocates & Shelter Staff

Participants were invited to a technologically well-equipped seminar room at OCAD University for the visual jury activity. The session took a little less than an hour. Since the activity was time sensitive and everyone had to be present before it would start, a snack break of 10 minutes was organized at the start of the session to ensure that everyone has arrived. The Next 10 minutes were spent on explaining the activity, such as how long each image would be displayed and how the semantics scale worked. Participants did a sample exercise for two minutes to get familiar with the process and practice. Their questions were answered and clarified. The visual jury activity lasted for around 20 minutes, during which time mages were projected on a large screen. Each image was displayed for 10 seconds, followed by a black screen, when the participants were given 30 seconds to fill in a semantic scale form for that image. A total of 20

images were shown and, at the end of the activity, the participants handed their filled forms.

Visual Jury with The Youth

Five of the six youth participated individually in the visual jury exercise. The same twenty images were shown as to the group, but on a computer screen. The same procedure of filling one semantic scale box for each image was adopted. Each session lasted for about 30 to 40 minutes. As a non-intrusive data gathering tool, the visual jury process allowed the youth to feel more comfortable to share their opinions voluntarily. Some of the youth chose to speak in greater detail about their thoughts of the spaces once the activity was over by requesting to see some images again and speaking about them.

The visual jury picture slides used with all the participants during the activity along side the graphs summarizing the responses of the four participating groups are shown in Appendix B. The graphs reveal the diversity in views held by architects, advocates and shelter staff, as well as the youth, and exposed some conflicting preferences.

3.4.2 Self-Observation Diary

Self-observation diary was a suitable method for learning about the experiences of the participating homeless youth in which youth

were encouraged to document their direct experiences with spaces. Due to limited timeframe as well as the complexity of getting approvals to access shelters for research purposes, this method was very practical in bringing in the necessary data without further complications and delays.

Self-observations□/□Diaries is a method used when it is difficult or impossible to directly access a certain place (like people's homes) or access is too time consuming. It consists of asking people to provide self-observations about their activities in the form of log reports or diaries, for example. Although this method involves the subjectivity of the participants in the data collected, it can be valuable to get a glimpse of life through the eyes of the people that are being studied (Experientia Website, n.d.).

Self-observation data provides the participant's personal perspective unlike observational studies where the perspective is of the researcher and is subject to the researcher's interpretation and understanding. While the visual jury gathered pre-cognitive associations with the built environment, the self-observation diaries gathered the user's opinions and cognitive perceptions and preferences.

The diary form used in the research (shown in Appendix C) was designed to capture emotional needs and preferences in the built environment from the perspective of LGBTQ youth with lived experience of homelessness.

All six youth did the self-observation diaries with a short follow-up feedback interview. The diary form was a page long and took about 15 to 20 minutes to fill. The youth were encouraged to fill two or three diary forms with observation of places they often visited or used. A stationary kit comprising colour pencils, pen, pencil, eraser, glue stick, scissors, markers, folder, pencil sharpener, supplies case, coloured papers, post-it notes and a small notebook was provided to each of the youth participants. This enabled creation of diary entries in the form of written descriptions and drawings. The youth were asked to keep the stationary kit for themselves as a token of appreciation.

The youth did not have a challenge in filling out the diary. However, youth participants preferred to fill the form sitting with the researcher based on their memory of a space rather than while being physically at the space. The reason was that it allowed them to save on travel time, especially because some of them were either continuing education or working; and the other reason was to have the researcher available to answer their questions. It is important to note

that as inclusive researchers, adaptability and flexibility for greater inclusion needs to be followed thorough the process, which results in better understanding and collaboration.

Most of the youth asked what “general setting” meant, and the researcher provided them with an explanation. For future purposes, “general setting” can be replaced by “what kind of space” which is clearer and simpler to understand. On another note, for the doodle area, half of the entries included drawings and the other half were written descriptions. One participant had challenges in spelling out words; in this case the researcher asked the youth how he may assist and the youth indicated that they would like to get the words spelled out when needed, which the researcher did. Inclusive design teaches that one must ask people “how” one could assist, rather than assuming and making decisions on behalf of others. Inclusive research processes should provide users agency and control whenever possible.

Some participants voluntarily shared extra information and thoughts about the spaces they were rating or writing about, which were noted. Interviews with the youth were more for obtaining feedback and clarification rather than to gather new information and therefore, the interviews were not audio recorded.

3.4.3 One-on-One Interviews

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted with one architect, one advocate, and one shelter staff member, all of whom had substantial experience relevant to the research topic, using the questionnaire given in Appendix D. The interviews were approached with open-ended questions so that interviewees are not influenced by the questions and also to eliminate chances of biases or presumptions that the researcher might bring. For example, the researcher asked the shelter staff, “what should designers consider when designing a space for homeless LGBTQ youth?” instead of “should designers include a living room in the design of a homeless shelter serving LGBTQ youth?” As a result of this approach in conducting the interviews, more insights were brought into the research.

3.5 Data Analysis

For each of the visual jury images, a graph was plotted to show the mean scale selection for each group. These graphs along with the associated images are given in Appendix B. Some of the graphs revealed distinct differences in the preferences of each group. These interesting observations are presented and discussed in the next section.

Data gathered from the youth through self-observation diaries and discussions that some youth had with the researcher over some visual jury images, as well as the conversations from the feedback interviews were examined to note down specific findings about space-emotion associations and other preferences that youth expressed.

Descriptive data from the interview transcripts were analyzed through content analysis using an inductive approach to arrive at findings that were combined and compared with findings from the previous two analyses to discover patterns for organized reporting. The interview data also revealed power dynamics across stakeholders and procedural nuances in shelter management that helped in adding a rich layer of background information to the research dissemination.

Data triangulation was achieved through gathering data using three different tools—visual jury activity, self-observation diary and one-on-one interviews—for research. Data triangulation helped in understanding the information from varied perspectives and ensured research rigour, quality, data validity and trustworthiness (Johnson, 1997). In addition, inclusive research processes and approaches were used for engaging with participants from marginalized and vulnerable populations. Including the end-users' voices made the design process more meaningful and insightful.

4 Findings & Discussion

Emotional safety... it's something that when you have 25 youth who have recently experienced homelessness living in a house together... they compromise each other's emotional safety, so emotional safety for sure... they argue, they have a bad day and take it out on a youth who happens to be there, or a staff.

–Advocate.

This statement by the advocate who was interviewed reveals the importance of combining the space design elements (**Space**) with the interaction between the users (**Person**) for a better emotionally supportive space (**Emotion**). The youth naturally associate emotions with their encounter with and use of space. The quote also exposes the emotional and mental state the youth are at when recovering from experiences of homelessness and the trauma associated with it, which is very important to keep in mind when designing a space to support their wellbeing. To recap, this research was initiated to answer the following questions:

- 1) What elements of space design evoke negative emotions in homeless LGBTQ youth and what elements evoke positive emotions?

- 2) How can a participatory process be established among key stakeholders to create and maintain emotionally supportive spaces in shelters for homeless LGBTQ youth?

This section presents and discusses the answers to the above questions.

4.1 Space-Emotion Associations

The theoretical framework that was used to filter the data to answer research question 1 is based on Jacobson's taxonomy for dignity (2009). As seen in Section 2, this research extended Jacobson's concept of social dignity to apply it not just to person-to-person interactions but also to person-to-space interactions in social situations in shelters. The findings from this research point that, at the highest level, space design that is emotionally supportive to homeless LGBTQ youth would uphold and promote their dignity. More often, these youths have faced dignity violation in their homes and social circles as seen in Section 2. By providing them spaces which are designed to provide emotional support, such as comfortable lounge area and private sleeping area, shelters could help promote their dignity, over and above providing physiological and safety support. Further, by avoiding certain design elements that might violate their dignity, such as shower stalls without secured doors (only has

curtains), shelters could support the youth by eliminating space elements that impact their emotional needs negatively.

In analyzing the data gathered through this research the types of negative emotions such as fear, shame, distrust, stress and anxiety experienced by LGBTQ youth while using certain spaces and the associated design elements that might need to be avoided because they “violate the dignity” of the youth were noted. Likewise, the types of positive emotions such as calmness, joy, empowerment, agency and security that they experienced while describing certain spaces and the associated design elements that might need to be included to “promote dignity” in those situations were also noted. These design elements are listed and discussed below.

4.1.1 Designs that Violate Dignity

Communal shower/changing stalls with curtains. The Toronto Shelter Standards specify that shower stalls should at least have curtains. However, shower/changing stalls with curtains are seen by the youth as unsafe and distressing places. In the visual jury activity, the youth rated the following picture of communal shower stalls with curtains very low.



Figure 5 Communal shower stalls with curtains.⁴

Most youth participants indicated that communal showers or changing rooms are very problematic, and that they prefer doors than curtains in

shower/changing stalls. A bisexual youth AB003 said that for her it's more about being shy in those areas and not feeling comfortable in than it is a safety concern. From the visual jury, participant AB005, a gay youth, mentioned that in communal shower areas a door instead of a curtain will provide more security. He also added that people have mental health issues and that they can relax, feel safer, more secured and take a shower otherwise it is too distressing. The interviewed architect made the following observation with regards to showers and changing areas:

⁴ Image reproduced from Appendix B.

That's an insight that you get from an actual end-user, even though you know exactly how to design that washroom from the building code and from meeting all these regulations, it's actually not necessarily a good thing, it's not necessarily serving the person that it was initially intended for, you've made it too universal.

Washrooms that are perceived as unsafe or are located in a non-LGBTQ designated shelter. Areas such as washrooms are usually not well supervised by the staff and as a result are often the same areas that most violent incidents occur at. Safety concerns especially in washrooms and shower areas are heightened in youth and they take extreme measure to protect themselves. For instance, a gay youth participant (AB005) said that he never went to the washroom facility when he was at an emergency shelter. This means that in case the youth needed the washroom, he never went to it for safety reasons.

Bunk beds in a non-designated LGBTQ shelter. AB005 described sleeping on the top part of bunk beds as extremely disorienting and stressful as he felt he had no control, vulnerable, exposed, had to watch for himself from all corners and had no idea who is occupying the bed beside him or under him.

Lack of lockable cabinets creates a sense of fear in residents as they worry of losing their belongings. The interviewed shelter staff mentioned that youth often lose possessions due to theft by other residents in emergency shelters and in shelters that do not provide lockers or lockable cabinets in shared rooms.

Crowding and line-ups in eating areas. In many emergency shelters people have to eat at certain times and need to line-up to get food and then eat in a crowded place; almost all youth participants indicated that those settings are extremely stressful and isolating. Few of them even said that it feels like a prison system. From the visual jury, the picture of the eating area scored the lowest by the youth.

Intake offices in open spaces. These make youth feel worried and stressed because other shelter users may hear their personal information. One youth said that in some shelters or drop-in programs they felt exposed and vulnerable due to the intake office being located in a public shared space where everyone can hear. Another youth said that they get very stressed out and afraid whether any of those hearing about their identity could be homophobic or transphobic. The shelter staff added that in-take offices being located in open areas are “risky”, “inappropriate”, “stressful”, and “breaches youth’s privacy and confidentiality”. She said most often shelter in-take offices are located

behind a big window or in a glass room or are in big open spaces, which are both not private.

Staff offices located behind glass partitions. Such design creates a barrier for youth to interact with staff and an atmosphere of Us vs. Them. This set up does not aid in bringing the staff closer to the youth or a friendly atmosphere where they can have a casual interaction, which results in the often seen polarization in their relationship and does not help the youth who have difficulties in trusting authoritative figures.

Uncontrollable noise levels. Noise from street traffic and crowding is extremely stressful and sometimes interferes with sleep as indicated by the youth as well as the interviewed shelter staff. The interviewed architect pointed out that enhanced acoustic separations should be considered; especially when there are multiple individuals sharing a sleeping space.

Unhygienic/unclean surroundings. The self-observation diaries pointed out a repetitive concern with regard to hygiene and cleanliness. This was indicated as a source of stress and the youth described it as “depressing”, “diseased” and “dirty”. Almost all participants indicated the need of focusing on shelter space cleanliness and general shelter resident’s cleanliness. Areas such as washrooms

and showers were reported by the participants to be poorly managed and cleaned. Other hygiene related concerns were offensive and depressing smells like sewage smell, mold smell or alcohol/drugs.

Upscale or homey designs. One youth, AB005, indicated that styles that are “too homey” might trigger sad emotions, feelings of loss and trauma for some youth. This youth also added, “Social projects need to reflect social realities and not perpetuate myths of class. Doesn’t honor experience of oppression.” “Too glamorous - privilege, who are we lying to? Average person can't afford this! - Trying too hard to look positive is not necessary”. Another youth, AB002, associated a small food drop-in site that is upscale with a sense of privilege and guilt especially when other youth were turned away due to space limitations.

Need for designated shelters for LGBTQ individuals. From the self-observation diaries, the general mood from shared areas in shelter spaces was reported by youth participants as "sad", "hopeless", "depressing", "displaced", "exclusion", "isolated", "afraid", "dispossessed", "oppressed", "impersonal", "not all nice", "so and so".

A shelter staff mentioned that a gay homeless youth she was working with cried after his intake interview with Sprout House. He told her: “Wow, I got to just be myself”. He said to her that finally there is

a place where he does not have to hide or put on a persona so that he is safe.

4.1.2 Designs that Promote Dignity

Gender-neutral washrooms. Youth participant AB002, a trans/genderqueer youth, was happy to see an image of a gender-neutral washroom during the visual jury but also said “a straight person will find this confusing.” Overall, the gender-neutral washroom was scaled positively in the visual jury.

Accessible washrooms. Some trans-identified individuals would require support in the washroom while recovering after Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS). This was pointed out by the interviewed advocate when she said: “Sometimes trans youth are having gender-affirming surgeries, so having accessible washrooms can be really important and having tubs instead of stand-up showers can make a difference for them.”

Single-occupancy room. A trans woman participant (AB004) who resides in a women’s shelter, said that having her own bed on a corner in a crowded dormitory has helped her feel secured and less stressful because she is located semi-away from bunk-beds.

The advocate said that having individual bathrooms and bedrooms, *"makes a huge difference"*. She believes that private washrooms are an ideal solution for shelters. She pointed out a successful case of the YMCA homeless shelter for young men at Vanauley Street in Toronto, where maximum two people share a bathroom and a bedroom. She indicates that it provides more privacy and youth get to know their roommate which provides some level of safety. She also pointed out that violence rates dropped significantly in that shelter when privacy was enhanced.

Large communal kitchen and flexible eating areas. When some youth spoke (AB003, AB005) about kitchen areas in their self-observation diary, they mentioned that they prefer communal kitchens. Youth appreciate how a communal kitchen and shared cooking encourage a healthy interaction among residents and it also provides an opportunity to learn how to cook meals and handle food. AB005 indicated that a communal kitchen has the potential in teaching youth discipline and rule following, cleanliness and respect as they have to share the kitchen with others. Therefore, he believes that the youth will develop awareness of how to respect each other's needs and rights and be considerate to each other (much like a roommate scenario). AB005 also said that communal kitchens give a sense of stability.

In terms of eating areas, although some youth may prefer to eat together, other participants indicated that they like to eat alone and in quiet areas. Therefore, the youth should have a flexible option of where to eat and when to eat.

Positive distractions. During the visual jury activity two participants (AB001, AB002) had smiles on their face when they saw vibrant calming colors, greenery and bright rooms with sunlight access. LGBTQ populations perceive a space to be more welcoming and friendly when it displays posters of LGBTQ flags, posters of quotes from the LGBTQ culture or that refers to gender-neutrality, rules and policies, reaffirming messages and motivational quotes.

Participant AB005, upon viewing an image during the visual jury session of the mosaic artwork on the exterior wall of Sherbourne Health Centre said: "it is important for all youth, not just indigenous, to understand and appreciate, the ideas of medicine wheel for healing" and that "art is important". He also added that this sends a "good positive message" and that it also suggests that it is a welcoming "community building" although he has never been to Sherbourne Health Centre, but the exterior artwork alone gave him all those messages and impressions. It is also interesting to note that Sherbourne Health Centre mosaic artwork on the exterior wall scored

among the highest positive spaces by youth. All youth recognized Sherbourne Health Centre, except AB005, they said that they attend the food drop-in and homeless support programs that this health centre provides and it gives them a sense of community. Therefore, the high scale of this health facility may have been influenced by the youths' personal experiences. They also all mentioned that they appreciate the mosaic artwork as it celebrates diversity in all its forms.

Lounge areas that provide fun activities. Youth reported positive community spaces where they attended their drop-ins or engaged in activities to be: "playful", "nice", "fun", "quite", "pleasant", "friendly", "relaxed", "chatty mood", "a place where you can forget your worries". Notice that in the last statement the youth referred to the space as therapeutic and supportive to their emotional needs. Youth participant AB003, mentioned that occupying herself in positive activities like volunteering, cooking or creating things helps her stay away from drugs.

The interviewed advocate, staff and youth also indicated that the communal space should also offer and encourage fun activities such as providing board games where youth can play together or supplies for arts and crafts or a TV screen where they can watch a movie together. This will aid in bringing and connecting the youth with

each other and hopefully encourages a sense of belonging and community. Hence a lounge area with activities such as TV, board games and books would promote their positive emotions.

Outdoor area for hanging out or gardening. The interviews pointed out that outdoor patios could be practical for shelter residents if they wish to step out and can provide a space for residents to hang out at or even could offer a future outdoor gardening project. The advocate raised a need for a smoking area or room as youth tend to smoke inside their room and though they were informed that they are not allowed to do so, they seem not to want to step out for a smoke. Therefore, an attached exterior space may help resolve this problem and also offer additional positive distractions such as greenery and gardening.

4.2 Empathy in the Shelter Context

To preserve and promote dignity and eliminate dignity violation, empathy is crucial. This research so far has covered the emotional association of spaces with the dignity framework. However, an undeniable critical factor when designing an emotionally supportive space is the people who are involved with the space. Empathy from the staff, architects and everyone who is interacting with vulnerable

populations such as homeless LGBTQ youth will be discussed briefly in this section, as it was a recurring theme discussed by all participants.

Participants AB004 and AB005 shared experiences of verbal harassment of name calling by other shelter occupants as “faggot”, “pretty boy”, and “tranny”. AB004 said that she now takes this directly to the shelter staff, and they have been responsive and taking appropriate action in comparison to past years. Shelter staff must be trained to welcome residents expressing their concerns and to take appropriate action. This will help LGBTQ residents feel supported and more open to sharing their concerns rather than leaving a shelter in frustration or in fear for their safety.

The architect mentioned that even though he does not identify as LGBTQ, as a child he was bullied in washrooms and changing rooms for being too skinny. He said that enhanced privacy options in those facilities would not only help LGBTQ youth feel safer but other youth as well. The architect using his own experience to understand what the youth might feel is an important example of the empathy required when working with marginalized population.

The process in the shelter system could keep in mind the following:

- From the first step of coming into the shelter, youth should feel welcomed and respected.
- The in-take process should be conducted privately and confidentially and not in an open space. Clients should be offered a seat, water or warm drink and spoken to gently. Many of the youth might have traveled long distances or might be fatigued from sleep deprivation or just escaped violence or recently flee to Canada as a refugee escaping traumatic incidents and violence enforced by their governments and/or societies.
- Assigning a room or a bed to the youth should be dignifying. Giving an individual a slip number and asking them to look for their own bed, which is the case in many emergency shelters, is very stressful and disorienting in itself for anyone. It would be worse for an LGBTQ youth who is fearful of being faced with homophobia or transphobia. Rushing a process is unsupportive and makes the youth feel isolated and not respected.
- Roommates rotation is stressful to any homeless individual, but more so for LGBTQ youth. It would be

helpful to try to match the youth with people whom they are most comfortable with, and make the rotation less frequent.

- There needs to be some leniency and flexibility when dealing with youth, while still being assertive. Banning a youth from a shelter could mean that they have no other place to go to. Unless the case is serious, shelter staffs need to consider warning or speaking with youth. This will eliminate the youth from feeling threatened of losing a bed, may lead to better cooperation from the youth side; and help with enhancing the relationship between the shelter staff and youth.

4.3 Summary

The findings presented in this section showed that homeless LGBTQ youth concerns for safety and privacy are at a remarkably high level and that in many cases it creates a barrier for them to accessing a space or using it. Five out of six youth participants indicated that safety is their main decision making factor to determine whether they will be staying in a place or leaving. The high level of trauma experienced by the youth calls for an emotionally supportive

environment in homeless shelters over and above meetings physiological and safety needs.

Dignity was chosen as the core of the framework firstly because to recognize the inherent dignity and worth of every person and to provide for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination is public policy in Ontario as per the Ontario *Human Rights Code*⁵. Secondly, empirical research with people with disabilities has shown that they value dignity above everything else, and that “design, when directed at promoting the dignity of the users, could enhance their experience and create inclusive systems” (Buelow, 2015, p.iv). The dignity framework applies to all individuals and not just people with disabilities as it essential to all human beings.

Based on the findings, a design aid is presented in the next section, which spells out not just design suggestions for emotionally supportive spaces in the shelter but also collaborative processes that may advance the experience of shelter residents.

⁵ *Human Rights Code*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H-19. Web. Can be accessed from the following link: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19>

5 Design Aid

In the words recorded in a self-observation diary by a youth participant AB005, “Shelters should make people feel POWER, DIGNITY, CONTROL, and there has to be PRIVACY”. The strong association the youth make between space and emotion, which is at the centre of this research, cannot be stated more strongly.

In keeping with this spirit, the purpose of this design aid is not to spell out guidelines or recommendations for architects about shelter design. Undoubtedly, they would be well equipped in their field; and there are published shelter standards to support them as well. On the other hand, much as the architects might wish to make their design user-centred, gathering user requirements could prove challenging when it involves engaging with vulnerable groups. This project demonstrated the usefulness of a participatory process that not only engages the end-users in non-intrusive ways but also includes key stakeholders associated with the end-users who would have insights about their requirements.

As an outcome of the research, a **design aid** is presented below for architects/interior designers engaging in social projects connected with design of shelters for homeless LGBTQ youth. Section 5.1 describes the design considerations of spaces that could prove to

be emotionally supportive to homeless LGBTQ youth. These considerations are derived from data gathered from youth, advocates, shelter staff as well as architects with experience in homeless shelter design. The need for this section is substantiated with a quote by the interviewed architect who said, "It's not all the time about design, it has a lot of time to do with management and it has to do with how people participate with the building."

5.1 Emotionally Supportive Space Design

Given below are descriptions of functional spaces in shelters such as studying/working space, sleeping space, lounge/recreation space, cooking/eating space, counselling space, washing/showering space, staff space and smoking/outdoor space. These are designed to provide emotional support to homeless LGBTQ youth. While most of these are applicable to transitional housing for LGBTQ youth, some points relating to emergency shelters and general transitional housing are also mentioned where relevant. Some visual prototypes are presented to illustrate the suggested design direction.

5.1.1 Studying/Working Space

Youth participant AB002 expressed the need for a quiet section that has computers and desks for people to study. The interviewed

advocate mentioned that youth in a transitional housing may continue education, therefore it is important to provide a quiet study area where they can concentrate and more than one youth can study together. Depending on the space and the budget, computers could also be located in that study room to support the youth with their learning or job searching.

Figure 6 shows the schematic for a quiet study space with computers. This is intended to encourage and support youth with their work on school assignments or search for jobs.



Figure 6: Suggested design of study space

5.1.2 Sleeping Space

Bunk beds do not make this population feel in control, particularly when the shelter is not designated for LGBTQ clients.

Partitions enhance privacy in shared bedrooms. Tent beds and capsule beds might also be practical solutions, depending on budget limitation. Bed with a tent cover, as displayed during the visual jury activity, is an affordable compromise to enhance privacy and control in a shared bedroom. Half of the youth participants found the arrangement to be fun, safe and practical for controlling their level of privacy in a shared space. Appendix F provides some real life application of the suggested design recommendations.

Cabinets with locks allow residents to store their possessions securely. Corkboards or shelves allow them to personalize and decorate their area with a sense of ownership. Shelves can also be used for extra storage. Noise reduction strategies are essential in shared bedrooms to ensure a peaceful sleep.

Single occupancy units would be most preferred. If not practicable, two per room and not more than four would be an alternative solution. It would be ideal for each room to have a window with a view. Windows need to have curtains or blinds to give more

control to the residents. Youth should be encouraged to personalize their space. All of these suggestions will give youth a sense of stability, settlement and ownership. An illustration of a **single occupancy unit** that could provide enhanced privacy and control to youth over their space is shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7: Suggested design of sleeping space

5.1.3 Lounge/Recreation Space

A **multipurpose lounge/recreation area** is depicted in Figure 8. This area should be designed to be multipurpose. The lounge area needs to be playful, friendly, cozy, stable and semi-homey but not too homey, providing a space and opportunity for youth to come together

and create a community. Multiple seating arrangements afford choices to the youth, giving them a sense of agency to decide what they are most comfortable with. Windows with access to sunlight and greenery, as well as board games and diverse reading materials, provide the much-needed positive distractions.

A bookshelf with a range of reading materials including comics, novels, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) craft books and topical books would kindle the youths' interest in reading. Board games and video games availability will encourage the youth to get together and interact with each other. A television would provide entertainment and could enable programming such as movie nights. Materials to foster youths' interest in hobbies and crafts would be a good investment. Movable furniture that are comfortable too will enable them to group themselves as desired with a sense of agency and control over their environment.

Quite, Semi-private and cozy corners for reading within a communal space offers options for youth to be alone or engage with others as suggested by the interviewees. One or two computers with Internet connectivity placed in these corners would enable the youth to browse online resources while being in a communal area.

An open space in the lounge area with clear view for staff is highly recommended and is critical too. This promotes staff visibility

and also contributes to ensuring the safety of all space users. The staff desk need to be a part of the lounge area and located in an angle that provides clear view of the youth in the lounge area for an unobstructed view which supports their work and supervision of youth, while also helps the youth feel protected that the staff can see them. Such colocation of staff and resident will also help eliminate the polarization often seen between the two as it will encourage casual interactions and conversations.



Figure 8: Suggested design of living space

5.1.4 Showering Space

Ideally, a private washroom in a single occupancy room or shared by maximum two individuals is recommended. There is a need

for gender-neutral washrooms and showers, ideally more than one facility should be provided in the case of a non-designated LGBTQ shelter. Some fully accessible washrooms with tubs instead of a standing shower are needed by some trans-identified individuals to support them during recovery post Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) as mentioned in the findings. For LGBTQ homeless populations, more privacy especially in areas such as washrooms and showers is crucial. Therefore, the following prototype focuses on single occupancy rooms or 2 per room.



Figure 9 Accessible washrooms in an LGBTQ shelter

This will also serve LGBTQ youth with physical disabilities who may require accessible washrooms. Depending on how many beds the shelter provides, space flexibility (old building vs. new building) and budget limits, the number of units including bathrooms with tubs could be determined. For this reason, ideally, a designated LGBTQ shelter should have at least a few units that offer tubs and youth could be asked during the intake process if they require a unit with an accessible shower.

In the case of communal shower stalls, more privacy and control should be offered regardless of whether they are located in a designated or non-designated LGBTQ shelter. Shower stalls in a communal layout in emergency shelters need to have secured doors, not just curtains, for safety, enhanced privacy and a user controlled environment.

5.1.5 Cooking/Eating Space

A big communal Kitchen area for shared group cooking is found to be useful in many ways as indicated in the findings. There must be flexible seating options for eating in a group setting or alone as desired by the youth.

5.1.6 Staff Space

Interviews with the advocate, shelter staff and architect all suggested that open spaces with more visibility for staff to overview and supervise the floor could aid in reducing violence, transphobic and homophobic acts and ensure better overall safety. This is subject to the LGBTQ knowledge competency of the staff and the training they receive on how to handle transphobia, homophobia.

The advocate pointed out the need for a staff meeting room, a counseling room and a programming workshop room in each shelter; as well as a secure storage space for sensitive and confidential documents and files of residents.

Many shelters provide designated rooms where staff can meet with the shelter occupants to provide counselling or case management or financial planning advices or employment services. An important note to keep in mind when designing those spaces is the safety of the shelter staff as pointed out by all interviewees. Therefore, the space should allow the staff to easily and quickly escape from a situation in a room if a client gets aggravated or hostile either due to anger, mental health, drug abuse, etc. Those spaces where the staff is meeting a client individually should have a 2 door room or laid out so that the staff is not trapped/stuck inside the room if the client blocks their way.

Other staff members should also be able to come to the rescue easily and efficiently, therefore staff administrations areas and offices has to be very practical and well planned. Colleagues should be able to hear/see a staff calling for rescue but at the same time this room should also allow privacy and confidentiality of clients who talk about sensitive and confidential matters.

5.1.7 Smoking/Outdoor space

Providing a designated smoking area might offer the youth a space to smoke instead of smoking inside their room. Additionally, the architect suggested that outdoor patios are practical spaces for shelter residents to step out and retreat. Residents could step out into these spaces and still be within the shelter environment. The outdoor space can potentially be combined with programming that focuses on gardening projects. Some windows from the shelter can overlook the garden and hence providing a positive distraction through the availability of greenery.

5.1.8 Additional Design Considerations

Presentation of Diversity and Inclusion. LGBTQ flags, posters, motivational quotes and artworks that celebrates diverse cultures and First Nations could be displayed. Policies and Rules could

be displayed in a friendly welcoming way to reaffirm the shelter's vision, values and goals of inclusion. Emergency shelters need to be more obviously friendly towards LGBTQ populations, therefore some attention is required to enhance the visibility of this population from the built environment stand point through creative arts and posters that represent LGBTQ and diversity.

Affordability. Space should not be too classy, or too fancy. This makes youth feel privileged and in some cases guilty especially when the space is limited and people are being turned away. This also comes across as insensitive towards youth who already come from families that struggled with poverty; there needs to be a balance.

Accessibility. Elevators, ramps need to be provided whenever possible, or accessibility arrangements must be worked out within the available settings (e.g.: youth on a wheelchair can be assigned a room on a lower level if the shelter has no elevators). A few options of fully accessible washrooms and showers with tubes are necessary as pointed earlier.

If new construction is planned for a shelter, the location of the shelter should be well considered and preferably close to a transit system and ideally close to an LGBTQ friendly clinic for trans youth, LGBTQ youth with medical needs, youth who require mental health

support and counselling. The shelter can also be located relatively close to other programs and services that youth can benefit from, such as: community centres, libraries, support groups, youth programs and youth employment services.

User-Controlled environment. Numerous design features are presented in this section that may provide emotional support through offering control to the user and enhancing their sense of ownership, stability and settlement.

- Control of access to sunlight with curtains or blinds and artificial light through fixtures and switches.
- Adjustable or movable chairs and desks, so that the user can alternate seating setups and layouts.
- Options for private and semi-private areas for eating, sleeping, studying, relaxing and sitting need to be available.
- Flexible access should be allowed without access time restrictions, especially to help residents who work night shifts.
- Options to escape from noisy areas to quiet areas.
- Materials, such as corkboards or shelves, for personalization and decoration of residents' own area.

- Cabinets with locks to allow users to be able to secure belongings and possessions in a secured space.
- Single room occupancy (or two per room) with access to a private bathroom.
- Shower stalls and changing rooms with doors in communal areas.

5.2 Suggested Programs & Services

In Section 5.1 the design of spaces that could prove to be emotionally supportive to LGBTQ youth were described. Suggestions are made in this section about collaborative processes that could enhance the support provided by these spaces to the LGBTQ youth residents. The interviewed advocate mentioned that Version 4 of the Toronto Shelter Standards are “aspirational”, and if all shelters follow them, there really would not be many problems for LGBTQ populations as there currently are. In this sense, the role of shelter staff of following and applying those standards in their shelters is fundamental.

The youth need highly supportive environments. To help youth manage trauma, depression and suicidality, an on-site support or a relatively close partnership with a near-by LGBTQ friendly clinic would be both practical and beneficial. This will contribute to support

homeless youth who are trans, as it will offer them a safe source for getting hormone injections and supplies and a friendly family doctor that they can visit regularly.

Since there was an interest in pets from the youth as indicated by the youth during the visual jury activity as well as the interview with the advocate, perhaps having an on-site therapy pet that the youth can interact with anytime can be therapeutic and seen as a positive distraction. Youth can share their feelings with the pet; if it is too much to talk to another human being, they can pet them, play with them, simply cuddle and give and receive love from. Pet therapy can also help improve communication and encourage the shelter's residents to open up to each other.

Staff and their offices should be easily reachable by the youth. As indicated by the interviewed advocate and shelter staff, the staff will need to be well trained in suicide prevention and trauma informed care, and be able to support youth emotionally or refer them to professionals who can support them best. The role of the shelter staff is seen in this context as fundamental in supporting the youth's wellbeing.

The advocate pointed out that shelters for homeless LGBTQ youth should have programs that are fun, celebration based, and that

art programs should be provided along with therapy and counseling programs. She said that youth feel safer in places where they feel more connected and belonging.

Young people do well and increase their self-esteem greatly when they are able to like connect to places where like they feel they belong, so sometimes that's an art program that they feel good in, sometimes it's like native cultural programming so I think that's something that we've seen over and over is that youth just feel their sense of self and self-esteem grow when they can be in a place where they belong.

- Interviewed Advocate

Keeping this in mind, several programs are suggested below:

- Scheduled visits by therapy pets, if having a therapy pet on-site is not possible.
- Access to gym and recreational facilities that are LGBTQ friendly.
- Workshops, such as: trans, genderqueer and questioning centered programs. Safe sex and harm reduction programs. Life skills, such as: cooking, cleaning and booking appointments. Additionally, workshops in leadership, resume building, employment search and continuing education and financial budget planning, etc.

- Access to and partnership with support groups for: HIV/AIDS, Hep C, art therapy, group counselling, Alcoholic Anonymous (AA), Narcotic Anonymous (NA), detox programs. Sexual abuse, violence and trauma survivors support groups.
- Access to LGBTQ friendly refugee, immigration and settlement services which offer translators or staff who have knowledge of multiple languages and who are well trained to handle people with trauma and are allies to/identify as LGBTQ themselves. In addition, access to legal aid services, lawyers and settlement workers, as well as programs such as English as a second language for those who need it.
- Fun on-site activities that could be weekly or monthly based, such as: cooking, arts and crafts, queer movie nights, games night, gardening, etc. It is important to emphasize that participation in those events is totally optional so that youth don't feel obligated to join.
- Partnership with LGBTQ friendly health-clinic or on-site nurse: to support trans youth by providing harm reduction supplies and hormonal injections, counselling and therapy, youth with medical needs.

- Client-centered planning and case management for best results that are tailored to the youth needs.
- Access to cultural based programs, such as: Queer First Nation programs and Queer faith based programs, etc.
- Connections with LGBTQ volunteer and enterprise programs.
- For non-LGBTQ designated emergency shelters, there is a need for a suggested list of programs and spaces where LGBTQ youth can go to during shelter closing hours as indicated by the youth participants.

5.3 Recommendations for Architects

An architect working on a social project, especially dealing with homeless shelters designated for LGBTQ youth, would have to wear many hats as financial planner, project manager, client manager, advocate and human relations facilitator. Some insights gathered in these areas from the interviews are given below:

Budget

Creativity doesn't get compromised because of budget. No excuse for not being creative even with limited resources and budgets.

- Interviewed Architect

- Low budget projects need to be handled with care, and therefore it is important to have a proper initial budget analysis. It is the architects' responsibility to ensure clarity of communication for any additional costs that are necessary for completing the project prior to starting the project. The last thing architects would want to do is be the cause of a non-for-profit organization to go bankruptcy. It does not look good socially or reputation wise, therefore setting realistic goals is essential.
- Creative methods such as engaging the community in building the design make a cost effective socially conscious, community building alternative solution. For instance, architects can partner with educational institutes and local programs to recruit volunteers to work with them on their projects. With this model, the volunteers would have a great hand-on experience that they could add to their resume, labour costs would be reduced, social awareness would be enhanced and there would be greater chance of societal cohesion and understanding.
- In many cases, architects working on social projects with low budgets will need to focus on temporary solutions that lead to a more permanent solution or address short-term issues and plan for long-term adaptations.
- Architects need to consider cost effectiveness in the long term. If providing a TV would be an economic decision to avoid opening up the chance for residents to bring in furniture and electronics from the street, then architects need to share their thoughts with the clients and funders. No client would want to

deal with costs of treating bedbugs or a fire incident and evacuation or an electric shock. This is certainly dependent on the population being served and their routine behaviours and actions, context and budget.

- Clients and funders are mostly concerned with budgets, therefore when negotiating critical areas architects, need to make sure that they provide proper and accurate budget analysis.
- Often architects will need to allocate where they would like to save money and where to invest more money for a successful and practical design that satisfies the end-users' needs.

Planning

- Architects might often find their roles to be more of a “facilitator” than mere designers. Architects will need to practise good communication and people management skills with everyone involved in the project.
- Prioritizing design decision might be one of the most difficult tasks that architects will need to deal with. The safety and wellbeing of the space users along with standardized codes and regulations will always be the top priority. Architects will also need to consider how the design will promote or violate the dignity of their various end-users. Future use, ease of maintenance and sustainability need to also be included in the top priority of space design considerations.
- Planning ahead of time and strategizing each and every step can resolve problematic errors before they occur. For instance, as part of planning a shelter project for an LGBTQ youth

demographic, architects may want to consider engaging the neighbourhood of where the shelter will be located as part of the design process or encourage them to provide feedback of any concerns or ideas they may have. A decent start will help build an understanding and eliminate negative impressions by the prospective neighbourhood that may result negatively on future space users.

- Architects need to ask more questions; to know why things are functioning the way they are, and why are they preferred, or not.
- The emotional association with spaces from the end-users' perspective need to be considered by the architects. Spaces need to be dignifying; warm; welcoming; honour and celebrate inclusion, accessible and diversity; and provide comfort to the space users, especially for vulnerable populations.
- Prototyping - preparing for the worst scenario (e.g.: if there needs to be a building evacuation) and testing scenarios may help architects to correct errors before designing the space.
- In some instances, architects need to become investigators who look for positive evidences (e.g.: a green area that residents like or use for gardening) and negative evidences (e.g.: broken doors and windows) when designing. This would lead to better design decisions and directions.

Empathy

We as society don't know how to help people. We don't know how to be kind. We are really bad at that... Like... We are all awkward around that homeless guy lying down on the sidewalk.

Everyone walking over him. And then every once in awhile you will see someone go down and say: are you okay sir? Can I get you water? Can I get you something? But most people freak out.

- Interviewed Architect

- Empathy, sensitivity, respect and emotional intelligence when communicating with vulnerable populations is at the core of designing for dignity and when applying participatory inclusive approaches. Sometimes, a person needs to imagine being in another person's shoes or think of similar experiences that they could relate to, to build that understanding.
- When working with oppressed and vulnerable populations, architects need to be aware that they need to listen much more carefully to what the end-users are saying.

End-User/Client Engagement – A Participatory Approach

So what I like to do, is go right into that shelter, or where it might be and talk with everybody, everyone should have an equal opportunity to participate.

- Interviewed Architect

- Architects need to engage all key stakeholders, and most importantly the end-user of the space, in decision-making and during the design process. The end-users will provide critical and insightful feedback that will result to better decision-making. While architects can use their professional

intuition, they can raise their concerns early in the design process. Everyone from the space users to staff and clients will appreciate it.

- Engaging the end-users, especially when working with vulnerable populations who are often not consulted will offer this demographic agency and control over the design of the space they are to occupy. The end-users know what is practical for them and most often they just need some guidance to put their recommendations and feedback in words (architectural terms).
- Participatory approaches are usually a continuous iterative cycle of interaction. Therefore, it is important for architects to keep the end-users as informed as possible throughout the process.
- Jargon words that only other designers understand is not practical when communicating with individuals who are not from the design world. This makes people feel uncomfortable to ask questions because they are afraid about being embarrassed. Further, it creates a hierarchy. Therefore, using simple language when speaking, asking and explaining is advisable.
- Architects need to simplify the design process to ensure that the end-users are included. For instance, instead of asking "What style do you prefer and why?" architects can ask, "What coffee shop you like and why?" Using that as a starting point, the architect can draw out more information. Based on that, the architect can point out themes to understand what the user needs and preferences are. Much of the input will

come from observations and evidence based proofs, which can give architects substantial data and evidence.

- Not all end-users and design research participants will provide insightful feedback and input. Regardless, architects will end with a handful of really good insights and perspectives from engaging multiple end-users in the design process.
- Clear perspective drawings to illustrate the ideas relating to the design or using a physical 3D mock-up model will aid architects in making the communication flow smoothly.
- Working on such projects, will expose architects to many challenges and adversities throughout the process from budget limitations to pleasing clients to catering and prioritizing the end-users needs; therefore, patience and flexibility is necessary.

Advocacy

You can be an agent of change; you just have to think outside the box.

– Interviewed Architect.

- Architect may face many challenges when working on social projects and in many cases they will act as an advocate to the end-users' best interest.
- Often architects will need to push to be able to engage the end-users point of view in their projects, as not many clients are in favour of this approach.

- Occasionally, architects may have to challenge clients and funders, about implicit biases and stereotypes that they associate with end-users.

Trust

You have to develop some trust; you have to make people feel comfortable, you have to be careful about the language you use, because designers as you know can use all sorts of language... We won't call a window "window", we'll call it fenestration... We try to create all sorts of mystique around what we do... So we find that being straight with people, very honest, and make them feel at ease, paying them an honorarium in a lot of times, bringing food to the table, and making people feel welcomed because these are things that are usually outside of their normal comfort zone, that's how we do it and we look at each circumstance differently.

– Interviewed Architect

- Gaining clients and funders trust is crucial for architects as they are entrusting the architects with a project that most often has a limited budget.
- Architects need to also build a good reputation and portfolio so that future projects are directed to them for their professional expertise in the area and sensibility of working with marginalized populations.
- Honesty is fundamental when working for non-for-profit organizations as well as vulnerable populations. If the end-users were promised that certain requests they made will be applied and then it was determined as impossible, the

architect will need to set up a meeting to inform the end-users of what happened and why. They will appreciate and respect the architects for their honesty and transparency.

Future Foresight

The architects can't answer all questions, but the architects are very good in raising these issues.

– Interviewed Architect

- Planning for an easy and low cost upkeep, sustainability and maintenance will result in a much more practical design.
- Lateral thinking, future foresight and planning of how space use can be easily transformed, or even planning for future programs and services and suggesting them to the client, will help keep things in perspective.
- The architects' relationship with a design project never ends. Professionally successful designers and architects will always conduct post-occupancy evaluations and stay in touch with their clients. This helps the clients to share their feedback and also inform the architects for future directions and considerations.

6 Conclusion

While Housing projects such as the Sprott House shelter for LGBTQ community in Toronto and the release of version four of the Toronto Shelter Standards, 2016 hold out hope for better shelter facilities for homeless LGBTQ youth, there is inadequate research on space design that could be emotionally supportive to this particular demographic. With a view to addressing this gap, this project set out to examine the current problematic scenario in Toronto relating to LGBTQ youth homelessness involving:

- A high proportion of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ;
- Lack of dedicated shelters for this community;
- Dignity violations faced by the youth in homeless shelters;
- Inadequate awareness in designers about space-emotion associations of end-users;
- Insufficient participation in design processes by vulnerable groups; and
- The need for shelter design to support their emotional needs and promote their sense of dignity.

Through a participatory process to gather multiple perspectives from homeless LGBTQ youth, architects/interior designers, advocates

and shelter staff, specifically on the emotional aspects of the use of space by people, this research project arrived at a design aid for architects engaged in social projects involving design and development of shelters to accommodate homeless LGBTQ youth.

6.1 Contribution to Shelter Design

The undernoted space designs that result in dignity violation of LGBTQ youth residents were identified as elements to be avoided in shelter design.

- Communal showers, especially those having stalls with curtains instead of secured doors.
- Changing rooms that lack privacy options.
- Bunk beds in a standardized, non-designated LGBTQ shelter.
- Crowding, especially in eating areas where there are line-ups.
- Intake offices in open spaces, where others may hear personal information.
- Staff offices located behind glass rooms or large windows, creating a barrier for youth to interact with staff and an atmosphere of Us vs. Them.

The undernoted space designs that result in dignity promotion of LGBTQ youth residents were identified as elements to be included in shelter design:

- Designated shelters for LGBTQ individuals.
- Gender-neutral washrooms availability.
- Accessible washrooms for supporting trans individuals post Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS).
- Single occupancy unit or maximum two to four occupants per room.
- Large communal kitchen for a shared cooking experience.
- Lounge areas that provide fun activities such as TV, board games and variety of reading materials.
- Outdoor area for hanging out or gardening.

Some of the suggestions empirically derived through this research are stated in, and thereby affirmed by, the Toronto Shelter Standards published in February 2016. This is a significant contribution made to shelter design by this research.

6.2 Contribution to Inclusive Design

The findings, outcomes, and recommended space designs for LGBTQ shelters may be specific to this context, location, population,

and demographic. However, inclusive strategies derived from this particular research may hold opportunities for the benefit of other demographics and the streamlining of homeless shelter requirements.

Inclusive design, as conceptualized by the Inclusive Design Research Centre, extends in three dimensions⁶. It (1) recognizes diversity and uniqueness; (2) adopts inclusive processes and tools; and (3) aims to create a broader beneficial impact that extends beyond the intended user group. Specifically, as shown in Figure 10, the following contributions were made through this project to inclusive design along these dimensions.

1. Dimension 1- Recognizing diversity and uniqueness:
 - a. Shelter-related needs of homeless LGBTQ youth, a group not previously studied in a design research context were explored.
 - b. Inviting minorities of this particular demographic such as people of colour, refugees and newcomers to Canada to the study addressed further diversity within the LGBTQ group.

⁶ For additional information on the Inclusive Design three dimensions, visit the following link: <http://idrc.ocadu.ca/component/content/article/48-library-of-papers/443-whatisinclusivedesign>

- c. Multiple stakeholders—architects, advocates and shelter staff—were engaged to gather diverse perspectives and shed light on power dynamics and procedural factors related to the design of a shelter.
2. Dimension 2 – Adopting inclusive processes and tools:
- a. Flexible data collection tools were used, such as visual jury activities, self-observation diaries and one-on-one interviews.
 - b. Participatory design process was adopted to arrive at adaptable shelter design.
 - c. A critical ethnographic approach was used for generating knowledge and reflection through end-user and key stakeholders' engagement.
3. Dimension 3 – Creating a broader beneficial impact:
- a. This research attempted to explore a different design perspective in the shelter system, space-wise and program-wise.
 - b. This design approach and process might be adaptable to shelter design for other vulnerable groups such as abuse survivors and refugees.

c. Enhanced, emotionally supportive space design combined with appropriate programming and attitudinal shifts will aid in better shelter service.



Figure 10: Contribution to Inclusive Design⁷.

⁷ Figure 10, the inclusive design dimensions' illustration is adapted from:
<http://idrc.ocadu.ca/index.php/resources/idrc-online/library-of-papers/443-whatisinclusivedesign>

6.3 Future Directions

The participatory process evolved through this research could be put into practice as part of a social project relating to LGBTQ shelters to compare the findings across the two studies. Participatory design processes being iterative in nature, some of the suggested emotionally supportive design elements could be implemented in a shelter, following which criteria for assessment of successful implementation and post-implementation impact could be worked out. Sustainability of the design aid could be ensured through means such as feedback mechanisms and post-implementation reviews to keep it relevant, effective, and progressive as a planning and design tool.

Possible areas for further research are: application of affective design to shelters and populations outside the LGBTQ community, such as women's shelters, and for shelters located in other cultural contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary of term

Affective Design: A design approach that focuses on the relationship between users and products, mainly targeting their emotional experiences.

Ally: An individual who does not identify as LGBTQ, but is supportive of the community.

Bisexual: An individual who is attracted emotionally and sexually to both men and women

Cisgender: A person whose gender identify aligns with their assigned sex at birth

Design Process: A process cycle that begins with the definition of a problem, followed by brainstorming, information gathering, analysis, solution development, prototyping, feedback, iteration and finally building up the design.

Emergency shelter: A type of shelter that provides short or overnight stay and basic needs for homeless individuals in urgent need.

Emotional Design⁸: Design theory proposed by noted designer Donald Norman (2005), which identifies three levels at which people process a design: visceral (initial impact from the design appearance); behavioural (look, feel and experience of the design); and reflective (afterthoughts and emotions of countering or owning the design).

Gay (homosexual / homosexuality): An individual who is emotionally and sexually attracted to persons of the same sex and/or gender. Although commonly used to refer to homosexual men, it is an umbrella term that includes persons of any gender or sex.

Gender: The social categorization of people as feminine and/or masculine. Unlike sex, gender becomes apparent in social contexts, whereas sex is an externally assigned classification.

Gender-neutral: Anything that carries with it no particular gender associations.

Genderqueer: An individual whose gender identity may not align with social and societal gender expectations. Individuals who

⁸ Norman, D. (2005). *Emotional Design: Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Things*. New York, NY: Basic Books. Print.

identify as genderqueer, may identify as trans, or both man and woman, or in between, or neither.

Heterosexual / Heterosexuality (Straight): An individual who is emotionally and sexually attracted to the opposite sex and/or gender

Homophobia / Homophobic: Feelings of rage, hate, and disapproval of homosexuality. Homophobia can be expressed in numerous ways, such as verbally, emotionally, and through physical attacks.

Homosexual / Homosexuality: Please refer to **Gay** definition.

Inclusive Design: Design that considers the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference.

LGBTQ: An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Two-Spirit, Queer and Questioning people.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs⁹: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs places human needs into five categories: Physiological, Safety, Love

⁹ More information regarding Maslow's Hierarchy of needs can be found at the following link:
<http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

and belonging (sometimes referred to as social), Esteem, and Self-actualization.

Positive Emotions: Positive emotion may be considered as any feeling where there is a lack and absence of negativity such as stress and discomfort. Fredrickson, in her book "Positivity"¹⁰ identifies some positive emotions, such as: joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love.

Psychosocially Supportive Design: A design approach that stimulates and engages people, both mentally and socially, and supports an individual's sense of coherence.

Queer: An umbrella term for LGBTQ; also a term of self-identification for people who do not identify with binary terms that describe sexual and gender identities. Although historically used as a derogatory term, many LGBTQ members have reclaimed it as a symbol of pride and diversity.

Questioning: An individual who is uncertain of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

¹⁰ Fredrickson, B. (2009). *Positivity*. Three Rivers Press (CA).

Sexual Reassignment Surgery also known as Gender Affirmation Surgery: Surgical operations that alters one's existing physical sexual characteristics to one that matches their gender identity; also known as gender confirmation surgery.

Transitional Housing: A type of shelter that usually provides homeless people with temporary stay lasting from months to a couple of years along with programs and services that aid in establishing future housing and financial stability.

Transgender: An umbrella term used to describe individuals whose gender identity does not match with their assigned birth sex. This term can encompass those who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, and others whose gender identities challenge gender norms. Like a cisgender individual, a transgender person may identify as straight, gay, etc.

Transition: The process through which individuals change their appearance or physical body to align with their gender identity.

Transphobia / Transphobic: Feelings of rage, hate, and disapproval towards transgender people or people who are gender-nonconforming. Transphobia can be expressed in numerous ways: verbally, emotionally, and through physical attacks.

Transsexual: An individual whose sex assigned at birth does not align with their gender identity. Some transsexual individuals may physically change their body with hormone therapy and/or sex reassignment surgery (SRS) and gender expression to align with their gender identity.

Two-spirit also known as 2S or 2: a term used by Canadian First Nations that traditionally referred to gender variances and fulfilling multiple gender roles and having “2 spirits” (male and female) as a gift from the creator. Currently, many LGBTQ First Nation individuals use this term as a broad umbrella that encompasses the broad spectrum of sexuality and gender in combination with native spirituality. It is important to note that not all First Nation tribes use the same terminology or interpret it in the same way.

Visual Jury: A methodology pioneered by Orfield Laboratories¹¹ in which users’ pre-cognitive responses to visuals are documented. It is a pre-verbal test of feelings and associations produced by a set of stimulus; also called perceptual occupancy programming.

Vulnerable Populations: A population that is incapable to cope with, resist and recover from the impacts of adversities.

¹¹ For additional information on Visual Jury, visit the following link: <http://www.orfieldlabs.com/>

Appendix B: Visual Jury Picture Slides & Data Graphs.

All photographs in this Appendix are sourced from Public Domains or taken for this research by volunteers.



Figure 11 Visual jury image 1

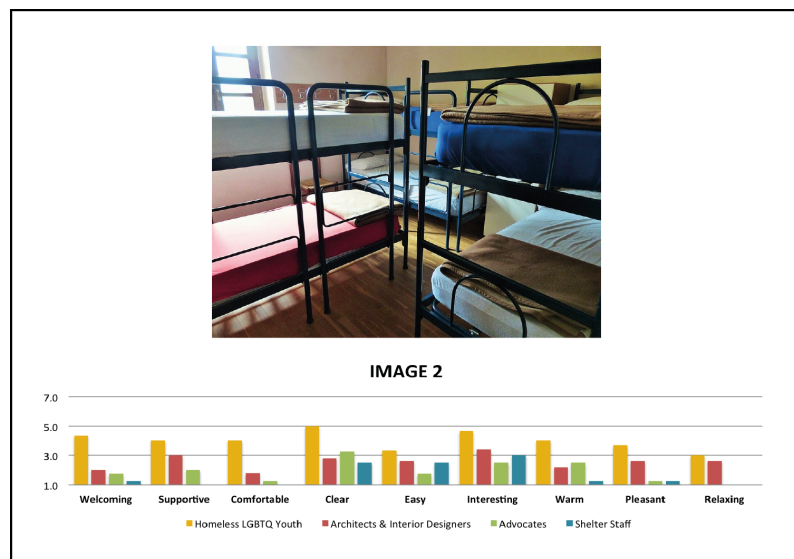


Figure 12 Visual jury image 2



IMAGE 3

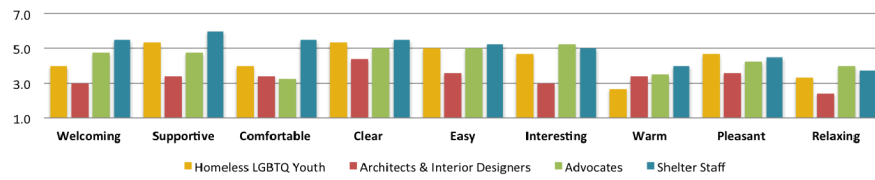


Figure 13 Visual jury image 3



IMAGE 4

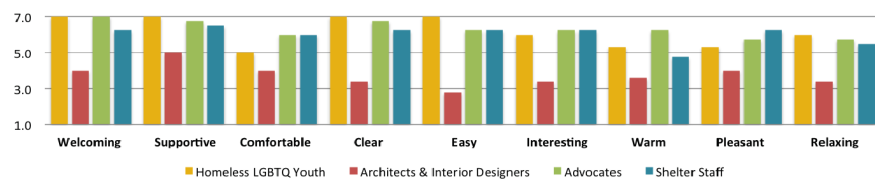


Figure 14 Visual jury image 4



IMAGE 5

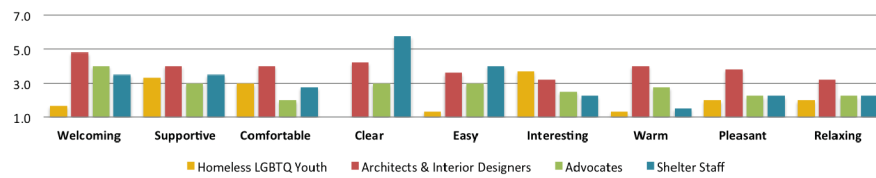


Figure 15 Visual jury image 5



IMAGE 6

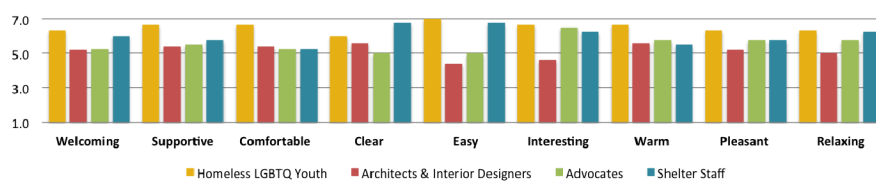


Figure 16 Visual jury image 6



IMAGE 7

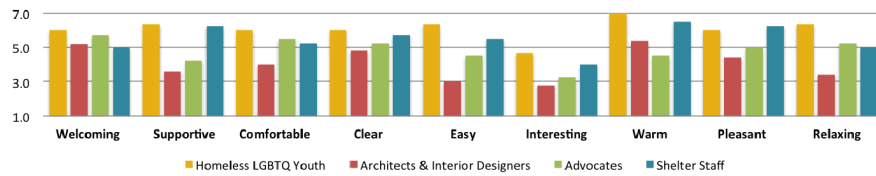


Figure 17 Visual jury image 7



IMAGE 8

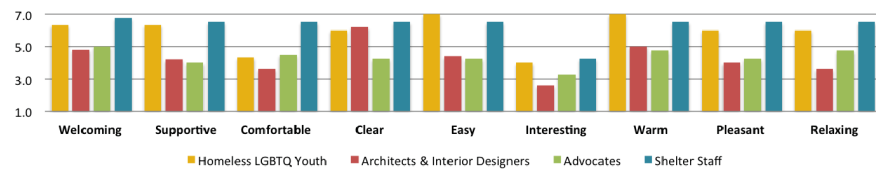


Figure 18 Visual jury image 8



IMAGE 9

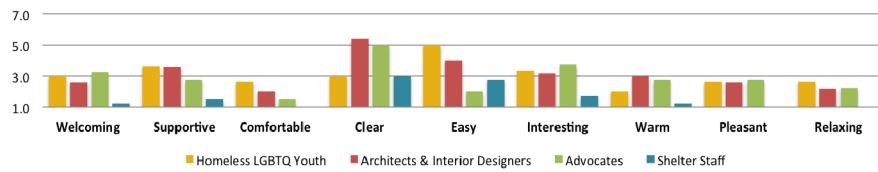


Figure 19 Visual jury image 9

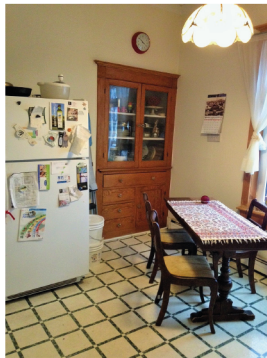


IMAGE 10

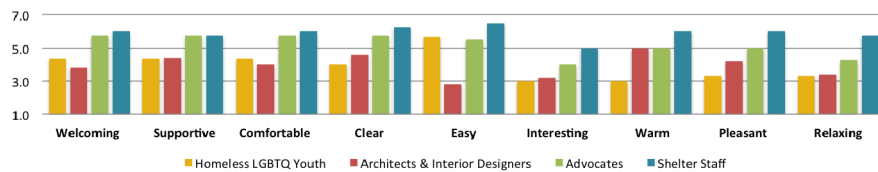


Figure 20 Visual jury image 10



IMAGE 11

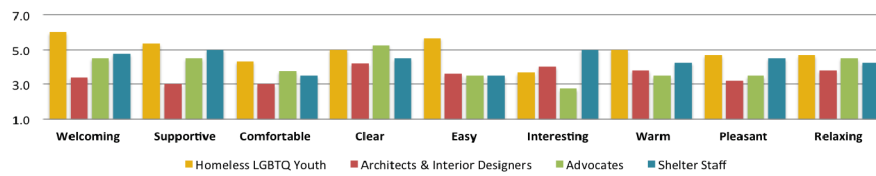


Figure 21 Visual jury image 11



IMAGE 12

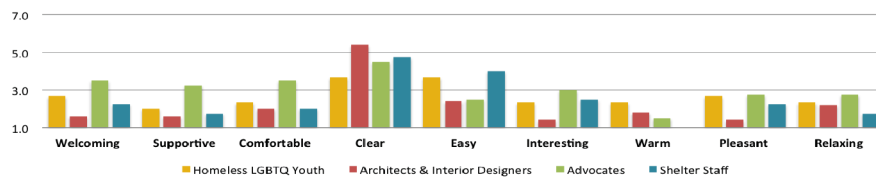


Figure 22 Visual jury image 12



IMAGE 13

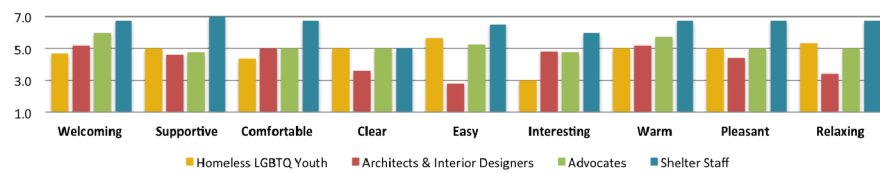


Figure 23 Visual jury image 13



IMAGE 14

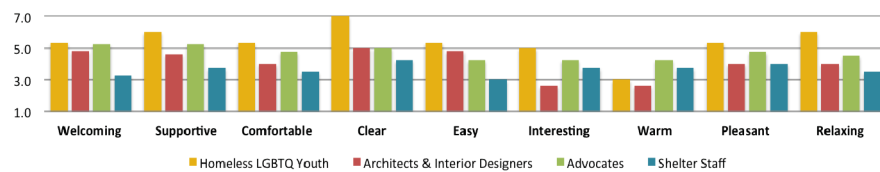


Figure 24 Visual jury image 14



IMAGE 15

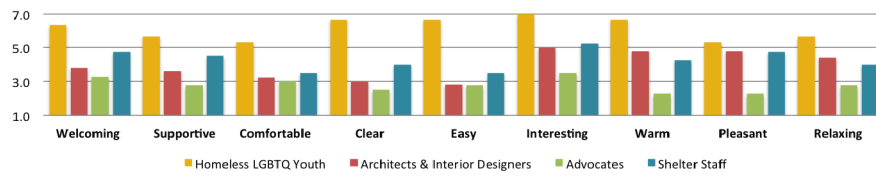


Figure 25 Visual jury image 15

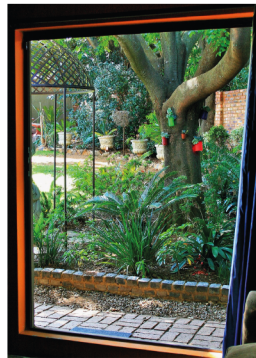


IMAGE 16

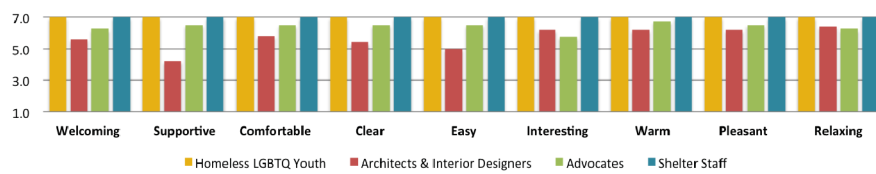


Figure 26 Visual jury image 16



IMAGE 17

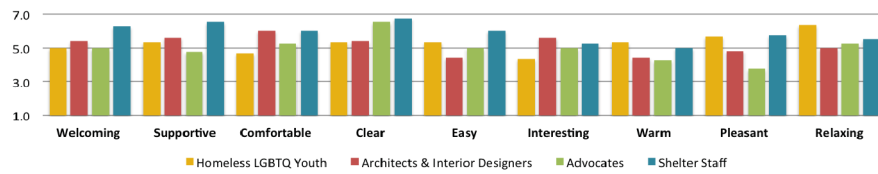


Figure 27 Visual jury image 17



IMAGE 18

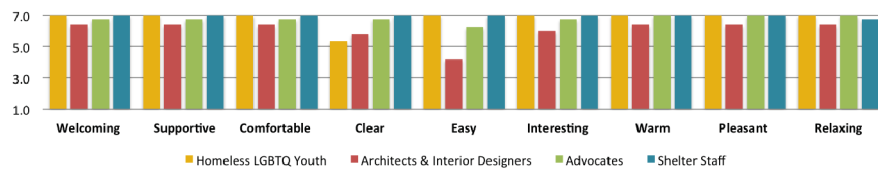


Figure 28 Visual jury image 18



IMAGE 19

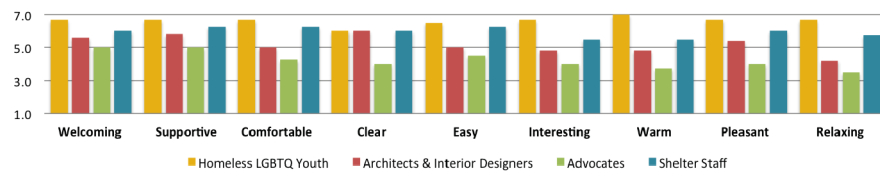


Figure 29 Visual jury image 19



IMAGE 20

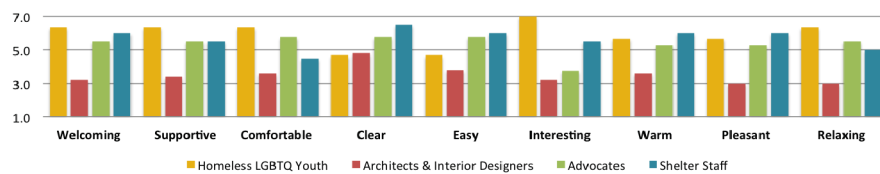


Figure 30 Visual jury image 20

Appendix C: Self-observation Diary

I went to:

The space made me feel:

I liked:

Reason:

I disliked:

Reason:

Thoughts & Notes:

Description of the place:	
<i>General Setting:</i>	
<i>Colors:</i>	
<i>Light</i>	
<i>Accessibility:</i>	
<i>Smells</i>	
<i>Textures:</i>	
<i>General Mood</i>	
<i>Privacy Options:</i>	
<i>Noise Level:</i>	

Doodle: If I could design this space, I would...

Figure 31: Self-observation diary filled by youth participants

Appendix D: Interview Questionnaire

Interview questions – shelter staff/service provider working directly with homeless LGBTQ youth:

Questions are designed to further elaborate on program services adopted currently in providing support to LGBTQ homeless youth, power dynamics involved and challenges faced by shelter staff and service providers.

1. What problems or barriers do youth run into in standard shelters specifically in terms of the built environment?
2. Are there further barriers resulting from the current regulations and guidelines?
3. If you think of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which include physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization. What are some of the youth's needs based on the categories mentioned earlier?
4. Do you think there is enough awareness and staff training of how to provide services and support to LGBTQ homeless youth?
5. What challenges do you face as a youth outreach worker with regards to providing support and services to homeless LGBTQ youth?

6. What are your thoughts of having a designated and specialized shelter that only serves homeless LGBTQ youth?
7. Do you see new strategies or accommodation plans adopted by standardized shelters in which they try to improve their accessibility for homeless LGBTQ youth?
8. What does a typical working day look like for you?
9. Do you work with other shelters for referrals in which you connect a youth to or help a youth move out from?
10. What are the considerations with regards to the built environment that you believe will support the service providers' work?
11. Can shelters become more inclusive to homeless LGBTQ individuals and how?
12. How do you imagine an inclusive space that accommodates LGBTQ youth who are homeless? What would it look like? What kind of programs will it run?
13. Do you have additional notes and thoughts?

Interview questions – Architect with Experience in Designing Shelters:

Questions are designed to further elaborate on design processes adopted currently for designing shelters, power dynamics and challenges faced by architects working on Shelter projects that may be funded by third parties.

1. What does your design process typically look like?
2. How do you engage the users during the design process and after?
3. What guidelines do you follow?
4. Do you think the same design process applies when working with vulnerable populations? If not, how would it differ and what needs to be considered?
5. In terms of inclusion of LGBTQ identified individuals in the built environment and designing for them, what design considerations you think should be tackled?
6. Do you think you as a designer have an influence over the project development?
7. Have you heard of Affective Design? How do you think it can be applied to shelter designs for homeless LGBTQ youth?

8. How do you prioritize what needs/requirements should the design cater to?
9. What is the role of the designer in a project that serves vulnerable populations?
10. How do you communicate design recommendations to individuals involved in the projects who are not from a design background?
11. How does budget play a role in shelter design projects, especially with a third party involvement such as government funders?
12. What challenges designers face when working with shelter designs?
13. Do you have additional notes and thoughts that you would like to add?

Interview questions – Advocate:

Questions are designed to further elaborate on challenges with shelters' accessibility by homeless LGBTQ youth, power dynamics and challenges faced by the youth and the resources available.

1. Why do you think it's important to have a designated shelter that serves LGBTQ homeless youth?

2. Is there a possibility of working with standardized shelters and their accessibility/inclusion of homeless LGBTQ youth?
3. In terms of the physical environment, what are the barriers that homeless LGBTQ youth face in regular shelters?
4. Are there any sub categories of this particular population that is further marginalized or forgotten? (E.g.: trans in general, transwomen of colour, youth with pet companions, youth with disability...etc.) And how do you suggest they become included and cared for?
5. In what ways do you think the current shelter guidelines support or do not support LGBTQ homeless population?
6. If you think of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which include physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization. What are some of the youth's needs based on those categories and how are you catering to those needs at [*Name of Shelter*]?
7. What should designers consider for an inclusive space that accommodates LGBTQ youth who are homeless?

8. What was the reaction of the neighbourhood when it was announced that [*Name of Shelter*] would be located at [*Name of Area*]?
9. What is the role of shelter staff at [*Name of Shelter*]?
What trainings were important for them to take so that they can best serve homeless LGBTQ youth?
- 10.What are the options that homeless LGBTQ youth have currently in support of their situation other than [*Name of Shelter*]?
- 11.Do you think that the LGBTQ community is supporting its homeless youth? How could they potentially help?
- 12.Is there enough societal awareness to this matter?
- 13.What are the efforts made by the government to address those needs?
- 14.What challenges do you face as an advocate for homeless LGBTQ youth's rights?
- 15.Do you have additional notes and thoughts?

Appendix E: Researcher's Journal

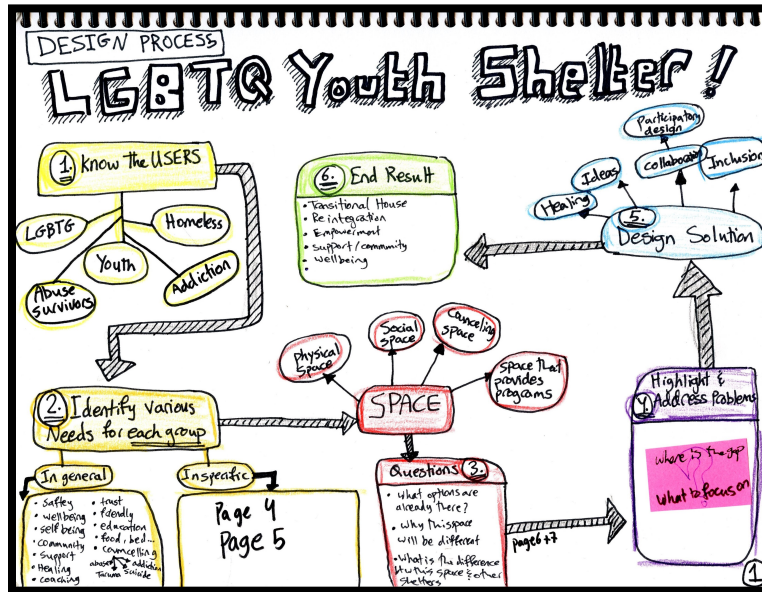


Figure 32 A process map of the research steps

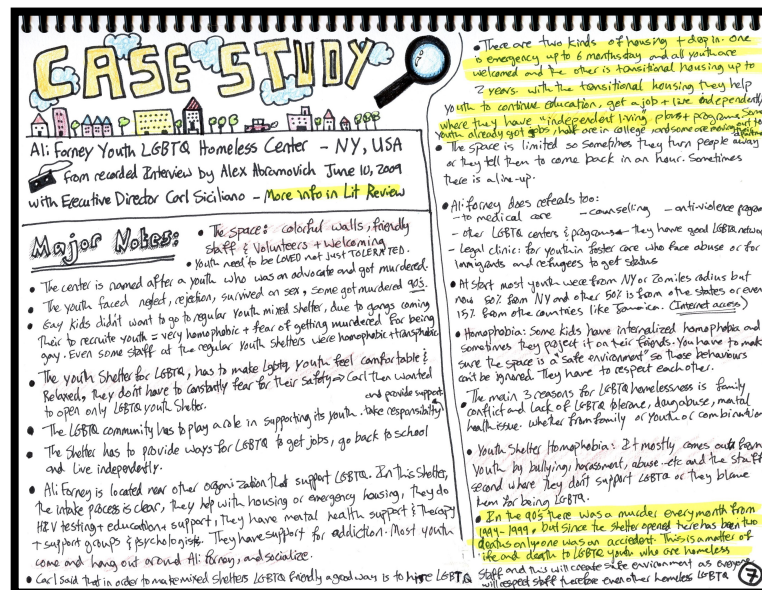


Figure 33 Researchers notes: Ali Forney Center.

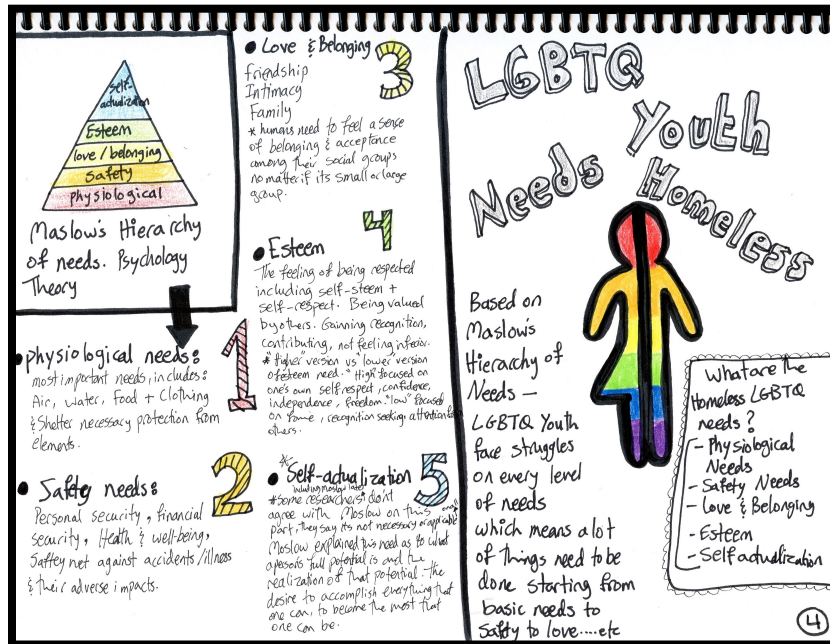


Figure 34 Researcher's notes: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

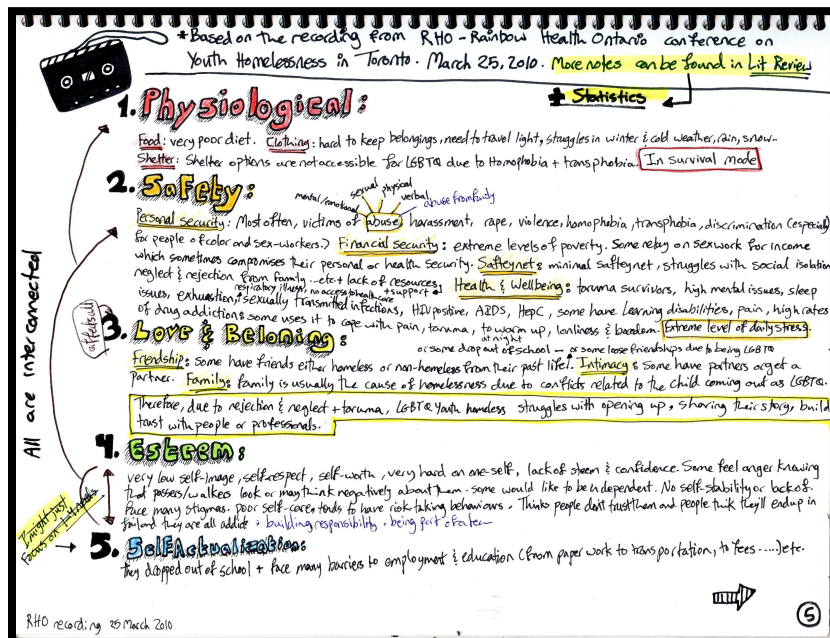


Figure 35 Researcher's notes: Needs of homeless LGBTQ youth

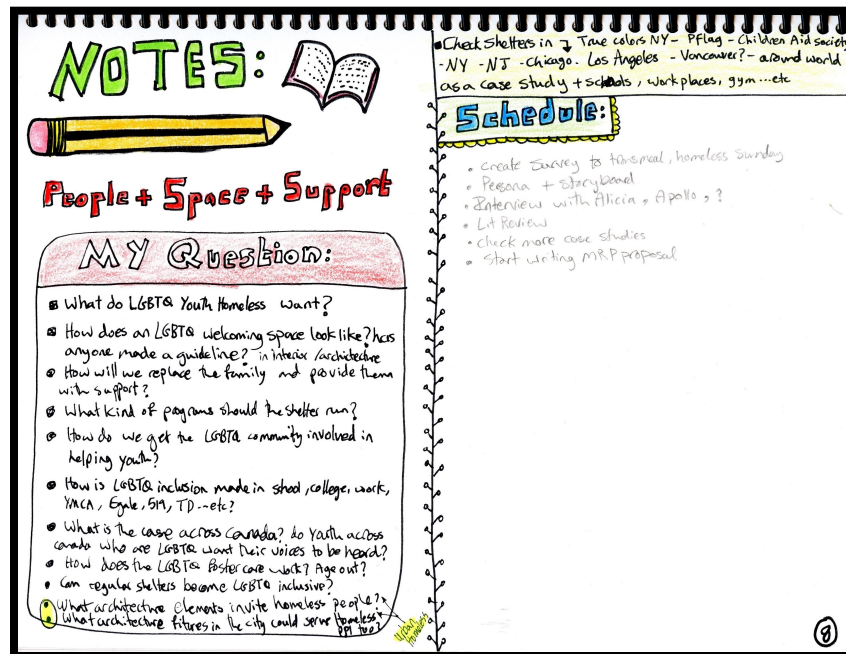


Figure 36 Researchers notes: initial questions

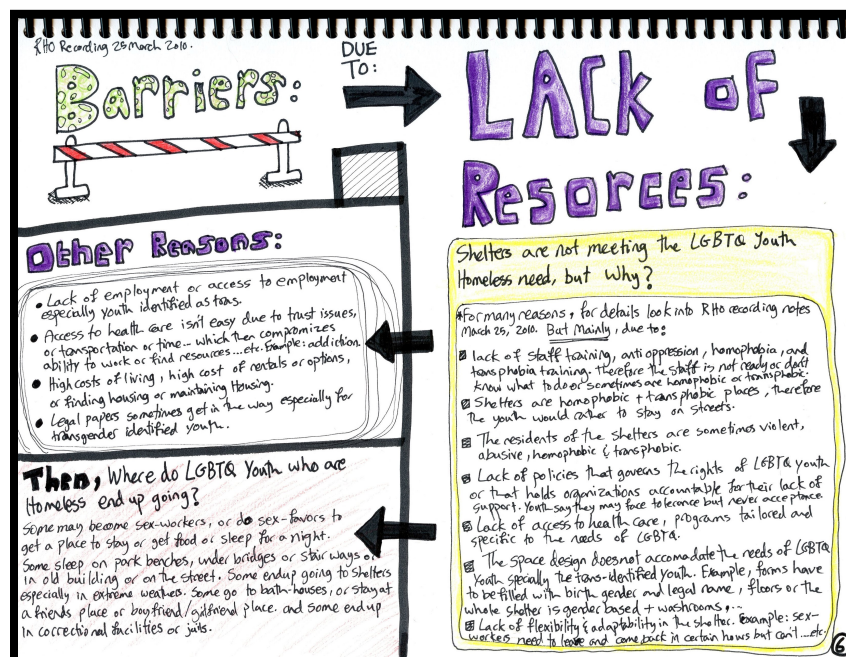


Figure 37 Researchers notes: barriers and gaps in the shelter system

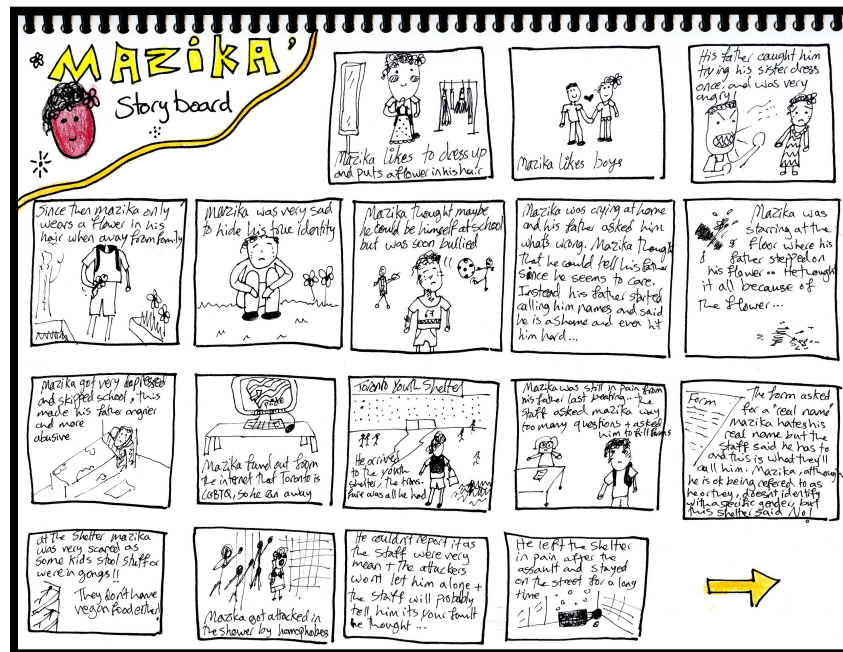


Figure 38 Story boarding based on gathered information (Part 1)



Figure 39 Storyboarding based on gathered information (Part 2)

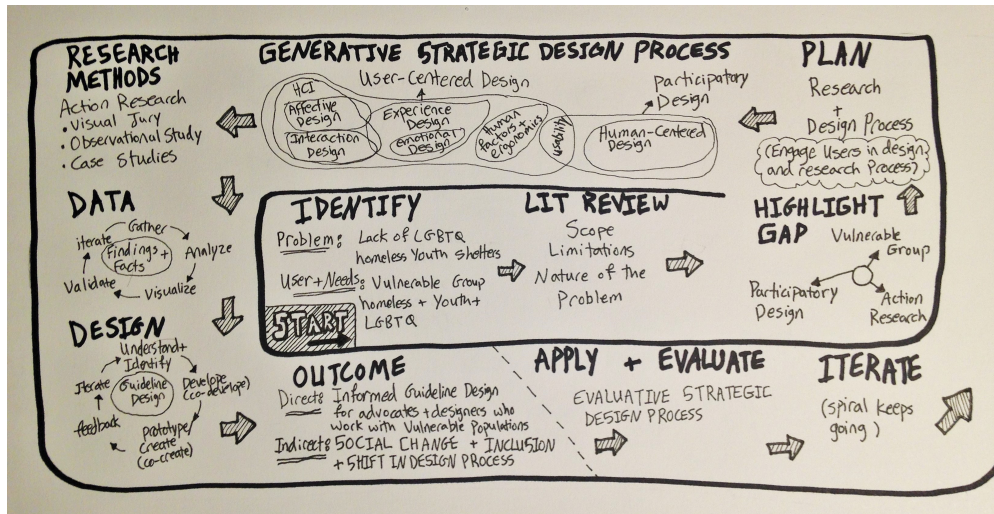


Figure 40 Initial planning of a design spiral



Figure 41: Artwork on homeless LGBTQ youth struggles – J. Willow, 2015.

Appendix F: Real-Life Samples

Sleeping Spaces



Figure 43: A room in an Ali Forney Centre emergency shelter.



Figure 44: A spacious room in an emergency shelter owned by AFC.

Both images courtesy of the Ali Forney Center website, 2016: www.aliforneycenter.org

Figures 43 and 44 showcase rooms in an AFC emergency shelter where a single bed is located near a big window with access to sunlight. A locker and a cabinet are located beside the bed. A blank bulletin board is located above the bed's headboard. The room is very simple and cozy. In one of the images one can see an occupant has already personalized one of the boards.



Figure 45 A Fort York dormitory shelter unit, in Toronto, Canada.

Image courtesy of Joe Lobko, 2016

Figure 45 features 2 single beds separated with a partition that creates a semi-private feeling. Each bed is accompanied with a shelf and a locker. The shelves provide an opportunity to personalize one's space, while the lockers provide individuals an option to secure their own belongings providing individuals a sense of stability and control over their environment, space and belongings.

Cooking Space



Figure 46: A kitchen in one of the emergency shelters of AFC.

Image courtesy of the Ali Forney Center website, 2016: www.aliforneycenter.org

A kitchen located in one of the emergency shelters of AFC is shown in Figure 46. The big kitchen has wood cabinets and looks very homely and has enough space for shared cooking.

